

Brazil - The Pantanal, Cerrado and the Amazon

Monday June 29 to Tuesday July 14 2026

TOUR OVERVIEW: Within its vast landscapes, Brazil hosts the most diverse flora and fauna in South America, including three of the most important and distinct eco-systems on earth: the mighty Amazon rainforest, the tropical savannah of the Cerrado and pre-eminent amongst these, the incomparable wetlands of the Pantanal. Our main focus is on the latter, though we also offer glimpses into the astonishingly rich Cerrado, as well as the extraordinary Amazon, which features as an extension to the main tour. For bird lovers, mammal watchers and especially photographers, this tour is simply a dream come true.

A short but unmissable stay in the Chapada dos Guimaraes National Park delivers a superb start to our tour. Part of the grand Pantanal Biosphere Reserve, we will encounter a breathtaking landscape of eroded canyons, rock formations and waterfalls, interconnected by woodland and cerrado. The latter, a type of dry tropical savanna, is home to a vast range of plant and animal diversity which the WWF regards as the richest savanna in the world. Enjoying a high degree of endemism and specialisation, the cerrado's unique setting provides an array of birdlife ranging from parrots to hummingbirds to tanagers, saltators and becards. Brazilian Cavy, a type of Guinea Pig is found here, though we may need some luck to come across the scarcer creatures finding a home here such as Pampas Deer and Maned Wolf.



The Pantanal is the largest seasonal floodplain in the world, a biological wonder larger than the whole of England. Overflowing rivers flood the area, bringing nutrients during a rainy season between December and April. As the waters recede, aquatic life becomes trapped in shrunken waterways and temporary pools, revealing the greatest concentration of wildlife on the continent, with vast numbers of storks, herons, egrets and ibis gathering en-mass. Interwoven within the terrain is tropical gallery forest, home to toucans and multi-coloured parrots,

most notably the much sought-after and stunning Hyacinth Macaw. However stunning the birds, it is perhaps the mammals which take top billing in the Pantanal. Jaguar, the largest feline in the Americas is the top predator and we are in the very best place to spot this remarkable cat. Other notable mammals include Giant (River) Otter, South American Tapir, Giant Anteater, Six-banded Armadillo, Ocelot, Tayra and several species of monkey, with many amphibians and reptiles, including numerous Yacare Caiman.



Amazon rainforest extension: Whilst in Brazil, and having enjoyed the splendours of the Pantanal, the lure of a visit to the iconic Amazon rainforest, the “Lungs of the Earth” is irresistible. So, for 2026, we are offering a two-part adventure. Our main tour will focus on the Pantanal and the cerrado of the Chapada dos Guimaraes National Park which we then combine with an enticing optional extension to the Amazon rainforest. Details of the extension are set out below, following a description of the main tour.

TOUR DESCRIPTION: We start in Cuiaba and head north by road to the canyons and chaparral-like terrain of the Chapada dos Guimaraes National Park for a two-night stay. This is much more than an hors d’oeuvre to the Pantanal however, the area itself hosting rugged landscapes and abundant wildlife that could easily warrant several further days of adventure.

After our snapshot visit, we head south towards the small town of Pocone, which lies at the start of the famous Transpantaneira Highway, the only road that penetrates deep into the Pantanal. To call it a highway is perhaps a little generous: it is in fact a raised dirt road which traverses southwards some 147 kilometres, crossing over 122 wooden bridges before reaching its end at Porto Jofre. We will enjoy a seven-night stay within the Pantanal, utilising three different lodges, all chosen to experience the full wildlife extravaganza around us. Our first three nights will be near Pocone, followed by two nights near Pixaim, where Ocelot provides a possible feline highlight and then two nights at Porto Jofre in the very heart of Jaguar country. Leaving the Pantanal after a dazzling 10-day wildlife spectacular, we conclude the main tour by travelling back to Cuiaba where we stay overnight, ready to begin homeward journeys via Sao Paulo.

Those tempted to stay on for a few days, also stay in Cuiaba for one night, before flying north mid-morning to the Amazonian town of Alta Floresta, from where we head directly to the world

renown Cristalino Lodge in the heart of the astonishingly beautiful, tropical rainforest, where we stay for a further three days.



The itinerary has been specially designed for Birding Abroad by our ground agent friends, so that we can appreciate the phenomenal countryside, birds and wildlife, securing the best possible views and so returning with marvellous memories.



Toco Toucan is the largest toucan and unlike other toucan species which inhabit forest, it prefers semi-open habitats typified by the cerrado.

BIRD AND WILDLIFE LIST: With perhaps 500 species to go at, the potential bird list is too extensive to catalogue individually here. At this time of year, each different habitat will yield amazing species. Some are cryptic and some the most brilliantly multi-coloured; some quiet and secretive and some noisy and showy; some resident and some over-wintering from North America. This is a birdwatchers' true paradise! The avian list will range through many families and iconic species: Greater Rhea, Southern Screamer, various types of tinamou, guan and curassow, wildfowl including whistling-ducks and Brazilian Teal, Great Potoo and various nighthawks, Agami Heron, Jabiru, ibis, herons, Sunbittern, Sungrebe, Large-billed Tern, owls, vultures, hawks, Blue-crowned Trogon, kingfishers, jacamars, puffbirds, toucans (including Toco the largest of them all), woodpeckers, falcons, parrots, macaws (including Hyacinth Macaw, again the largest of them all), antwrens, antshrikes, antbirds, gnatcatchers, antpittas, woodcreepers, foliage-gleaners, spinetails, manakins, cotingas, many flycatchers and tody-flycatchers, greenlets, swallows, gnatcatchers, wrens, thrushes, euphonia, sparrows, warblers, tanagers and seedeaters.

Those staying for the Amazonian forest extension will see even more species within these families around the Cristalino Lodge.

The Pantanal is home to over 135 species of mammals, 50 amphibians and 100 reptiles, with many hundreds of species of butterfly and fish. We will sample a significant selection of these during our tour. Jaguar or "El Tigre" as it is known locally, is of course our primary target. Some of the mammals are easily seen by day but most, being nocturnal or crepuscular in nature, are more challenging to spot, though a few early morning and evening sorties offer chances to encounter the following: Giant Anteater, Nine-banded Armadillo, Six-banded Armadillo, Ocelot, South American Tapir, Crab-eating Fox, South American Coati, Crab-eating Raccoon, Neotropical Otter, Giant Otter, Marsh Deer, Red Brocket Deer, Grey Brocket Deer, Capaybara, Brazilian Porcupine and Tapeti (Brazilian Rabbit). Prominent reptiles and amphibians include Yacare Caiman, Yellow Anaconda, Green Anaconda, and the cute Chaco Tree Frog.



PHOTOGRAPHIC OPPORTUNITIES: Those with cameras should bring them! In the dry season when we visit, the Transpantaneira is excellent for wildlife watching because roadside ditches and pools retain water and become magnets for birds, mammals and reptiles. In general, wildlife is often confiding whilst the sheer abundance of birds is a spectacle to behold.



Black-and-gold Howler – the female is the more golden of the pair

EASE AND PACE: Breakfasts will usually be taken early around 06.00 to make the most of the peak early morning activity. Basic fitness is all that is required. Full days will be spent in the field, punctuated by a lunch break and we may occasionally take an early afternoon rest. Most walks are of a short distance on rather flat terrain, though some very gentle uphill walking may be undertaken in the cerrado, done at a sensible pace. Several relaxing boat trips are planned on calm waters taking us close-up to the flora and fauna.

ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD: We enjoy full board accommodation throughout, starting with lunch upon our arrival in Brazil and concluding with lunch on the final day of the tour. Lunches will usually be a light buffet at the hotel. Bottled water will be supplied on the tour bus each day.

All hotel lodges are of a good standard with en-suite facilities. Each are themselves havens for birds and wildlife.

WEATHER: We can expect warm, even hot weather with daytime temperatures peaking between 30 and 35 C. Although the dry season will be well underway, rain is perhaps likely at some time during the trip, normally coming in short sharp showers.

PRICE: The price of the main 12-day tour to the Cerrado and Pantanal is to be £5995 pp based on two people sharing a room. This includes full board accommodation (bed, breakfast, lunch and dinner), all ground transportation with a local driver, mineral water, boat trips from

Porto Jofre and from Paixam, night drives for nocturnal mammals, any reserve entrance fees, and the services of a full time bilingual local wildlife guide plus your Birding Abroad leaders. Single rooms are available at a supplement of £850.

Tipping is widely expected so this is also covered in the price.

Not included are your return international flights London to Sao Paulo and onwards to Cuiaba. Also not included are any drinks not supplied with meals and any souvenirs or ad hoc purchases you wish to make.

To secure a place on this exciting tour, please complete a booking form and return this with a £750 deposit.



Chestnut-eared Aracari – its name comes from the language of indigenous people

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS: Flights from the UK to Brazil are operated by several airlines but we suggest LATAM Airways, the Brazilian national carrier as offering the best schedule for this tour. Their outbound flights from London Heathrow depart late evening. Return flights leave Cuiaba early evening, arriving back in LHR mid-afternoon, both via Sao Paulo.

The use of LATAM Airlines for our flights makes it more straightforward for luggage transfers between the domestic and international flights.

For those choosing to stay on for the Amazon extension, internal flights operate between Cuiaba and Alta Floresta.

At the time of your reservation, we will provide assistance with booking your flights so that you can travel with the Birding Abroad leaders.

GROUP SIZE: The tour will proceed with 8 group members plus Birding Abroad leaders and local guides throughout, up to maximum of 12.

DAY TO DAY ITINERARY

Day 1: Monday 29 June. Your Birding Abroad leaders will take an overnight flight from London Heathrow airport to Sao Paulo in Brazil, using the national airline LATAM Airlines.

Days 2: Tuesday 30 June. Upon arrival in Sao Paulo, we have a short connection before taking an onward flight to Cuiaba where we arrive at 09:20, ready for the start of the ground tour. Here we will be met by our local guide before setting off on a one and half hours' drive to the Chapada dos Guimaraes National Park. The terrain is rugged with red sandstone cliffs and cascading waterfalls interspersed with areas of dry savannah and ribbons of riverain gallery forest.

We will have time to look for the hugely impressive Blue-winged Macaw and Red-and-green Macaw both of which nest and roost on the sandstone cliffs. Notable birds may include King Vulture, Curl-crested Jay, Grey Monjita, Crested Black-tyrant and Swallow Flycatcher. Night Chapada dos Guimaraes National Park.



King Vulture – often the first to make a cut at a fresh carcass

Day 3: Wednesday 1 July. Today we will spend a full day in the national park, notable in respect of being the actual geographic centre of South America, the spot suitably designated by a white marble obelisk near town. After breakfast we begin to make our acquaintance with the many widespread, but nonetheless impressive, bird species and families, represented by pearls such as Guira Cuckoo, Swallow-tailed Hummingbird, Blue-crowned Toucan, Little Woodpecker, Savanna Hawk, Helmeted Manakin and Saffron Finch. As we absorb their unfamiliar colours and shapes, the local guide will begin to focus our attention on the true avian specialities of the area, likely to include a selection of Small-billed Tinamou, White Hawk, Rufous-sided Pygmy-tyrant, White-eared Puffbird, Horned Sungem, White-rumped Tanager, Coalcrest and Plumbeous Seedeater.

After lunch we can take a short break before visiting the amazing Bridal's Veil Waterfall area, a roost site for various macaws with chances of Yellow-ridged Toucan, Chestnut-eared Aracari, Great Dusky, White-collared and Biscutate Swifts and Cliff Flycatcher.

The area is known to have Pampas Deer, Pampas Cat and even Maned Wolf, but we would need some amazing luck to see any of these three secretive and scarce mammals. Night Chapada dos Guimaraes National Park.

Day 4: Thursday 2 July. Open agricultural fields encroaching onto the cerrado bring new possibilities and taking a stroll here could easily produce Aplomado Falcon, Chapada Flycatcher, White-browed Blackbird (actually a type of meadowlark), Yellowish Pipit, Grassland Sparrow and the exotic Toco Toucan, famed by Guinness adverts in the UK. With many cerro specialists remaining as potential targets; for example, Streamcreeper and Collared Crescentchest, our stay will ensure a terrific cross section of the avian community hereabouts.

After lunch, we head south to the small 'pit-stop' town of Pocone, where our Pantanal adventure begins. Here we join the Transpantaneira, a dusty graded track recognised worldwide as being fantastic for watching wildlife. Along its way, it gives access to a range of habitats, often drier grasslands and scrub in the north and more forested with swamps further south. Roadside ditches created when the road was built, retain water through the warmer months becoming magnets for waterbirds, reptiles and mammals. Our lodges nestle away from the road, in their own expansive grounds, the first being near the start of the road. Here we check-in and enjoy a coffee before venturing out later in the afternoon.



We spend our first three nights at this superbly situated lodge enjoying walks around the grounds and using open-top truck rides to explore a mosaic of habitats including fragmented woodlands and permanent water bodies.

Heading out, grassland surrounding the lodge holds striking birds such as the Ostrich-like Great Rhea and the equally leggy Red-legged Seriema. The latter's long legs enable them to run faster than a human, so they rarely need to take to the air. They are aggressive predators, known to even take snakes, but normally they seek small vertebrate prey which is picked up and repeatedly thrown it to the ground until dead or stunned.

Walking trails yield further sought after birds such as Chaco Chachalaca, Great Rufous Woodcreeper, Bat Falcon, Ferruginous Pygmy-owl and the range-restricted Mato Grosso Antbird.

For many however, the most memorable sighting will be the vibrant Hyacinth Macaw, which at one metre long is the largest species of macaw in the world. Its dazzling blue feathers combine with a bright yellow eye ring and bill base to make this protected and vulnerable species a truly wondrous sight. Night near Pocone



Hyacinth Macaw, their powerful bill can break open palm tree nuts, difficult even with a hammer

Days 5 & 6: Friday and Saturday 3 & 4 July. Pre-dawn walks are likely to target Giant Anteater, a key mammalian objective. These solitary animals are more closely related to sloths than to any other group of mammals, though in contrast they forage on the ground for ants and termites using their foreclaws to dig the insects out and a long sticky tongue to collect them. At around two metres in length the Giant Anteater has a particularly elongated head and narrow muzzle, and though it has poor eyesight, it possesses a powerful sense of smell – some 40 times that of a human!



Three long trails offer good birding, remnant forest areas hosting the endemic Chestnut-bellied Guan and the striking contrasts of the Bare-faced Curassow, as well as smaller fare such as Planalto Slaty-Antshrike and White-lored Spinetail.

We may also spot Crab-eating Fox and Crab-eating Raccoon, though our chances for these will be better during a night drive after sunset, when Azara's Night Monkey becomes a target as it is more easily seen here than elsewhere along the Transpantaneira. Two further nights near Pocone.

Days 7 & 8: Sunday & Monday 5 & 6 July. Today we head further along the Transpantaneira, journeying less than half-way to enable frequent stops to take in the wildlife all around us.

The bird watching will be amazing with non-stop activity at seasonal roadside pools, which offer sensational views of thousands of storks, herons, egrets and ibis which concentrate around any remaining waterholes. Likely species include Anhinga, Jabiru, Roseate Spoonbill, Limpkin, Plumbeous Ibis, and Large-billed Tern, with Snail Kite and Savannah Hawk circling overhead. The secretive Sunbittern (shown overleaf) is well camouflaged at rest, its long legs, long neck and sharp bill at first resembling a dull stripey heron. Once its wings are opened however, its vivid colours simply dazzle, especially when the bird feels threatened - it displays a pair of bright 'eye spots' on its remiges! Strangely, its closest living genetic relative is not amongst its own waterbird neighbours, but the strange Kagu of New Caledonia, indicating a Gondwanan origin.



Viewing opportunities along the way will prompt frequent stops, and we will be on the look-out for Blue-crowned Trogon, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Turquoise-fronted Amazon, Laughing Falcon, Rufous Hornero and a variety of colourful tanagers.

Our next lodge nestles riverside near the village of Pixaim, where we arrive for lunch. With a full afternoon and all the next day at our disposal, our guides will schedule an exciting itinerary. Gentle boat cruises along the Pixaim river, afford fantastic prospects for close-up photographs of Giant Otters. These social and noisy creatures are another key target. The range of this largest species of otter has become much reduced and fragmented after decades of poaching for its velvety pelt. Giant Otters live in family groups of between four and eight individuals, preying on a diet of fish but will also eat crabs, turtles, snakes and even small caiman!



The list of exotic birds will continue to grow with Cocoi Heron, Boat-billed Heron, White-throated Piping-guan, and above us both Black Collared and Great Black Hawk.

Flowering trees in the gardens frequently attract Yellow-billed Cardinals and Orange-backed Troupial amongst a host of other birds including Monk and Yellow-chevroned Parakeets, Band-tailed Antbird, the smart Helmeted Manakin, Yellow-collared Macaw and the scarce Nanday Parakeet. For those with a liking for nightjar-type birds, Pauraque are numerous and Great Potoo can be seen by day, the lodge sometimes providing an observation platform to view this elusive night bird. Walking trails enter gallery woodland, haunt of Black-tailed Marmoset and Black-and-gold Howler, whilst most of the Pantanal forest bird specialities are present including Buff-bellied Hermit, White-naped Xenopsaris and Rusty-backed Antwren.

After dinner, as night falls, patience and quiet stillness will be required if we are to be rewarded with two very special mammals which frequent the surrounding forest. The arboreal herbivore Brazilian Porcupine lives here, its diet consisting mainly of leaves and fruit, which it reaches by climbing using its tail to curl around branches for stability. We also have a very good chance of seeing a stellar cat species, for vegetated waterside banks here are the realm of the shy and solitary Ocelot. The lodge guides pride themselves on securing an excellent hit rate for seeing Ocelot, and with two nights available, we hope to be fortunate! Nights near Pixaim.

Days 9 & 10: Tuesday and Wednesday 7 & 8 July. Today we complete the final leg of our southbound Transpantaneira journey as we head to Porto Jofre where the road abruptly ends. We have two full days exploring the Pantanal by boat. Our quest will be to spot a Jaguar, the primary reason eco-tourists travel to this region.



Jaguars are South America's only member of the genus *Panthera*, the world's largest cats of which there are only five living species (the others being Leopard, Lion, Snow Leopard and Tiger). Their powerful bite can pierce the skull of mammalian prey, as well as through the skull of a caiman and the carapaces of turtle and tortoises. It is threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation, poaching and human-wildlife conflict particularly with ranchers. Cooler air

draws these amazing felines to the riverbank and with luck we hope to enjoy several sightings of this magnificent animal, which has featured prominently in the mythology of indigenous peoples such as the Aztec and Maya civilisations.

The Cuiaba river east of Porto Jofre is undoubtedly the best place to see Jaguar and we begin shortly after lunch, cruising the waterways guided by sharp-eyed boat men who know the river well. Any of the five species of South American kingfishers are possible; Ringed, Amazon, Green, Green-and-rufous and the diminutive American-pygmy, as well as the striking Rufous-tailed Jacamar. Pools will be full of Yacare Caiman seeking out their prey of mainly fish, perhaps not so aware that they themselves could be the next meal for a pouncing Jaguar! Quieter riverbanks could hold Sungrebe, a member of the slightly strange family *Heliornithidae*, which globally has only two other members, the African Finfoot and the Asian Finfoot. With broad lobes on their feet, they display a convergence to grebes or even coots though genetically they are most close to rails! They are sometimes referred to as 'Marsupial Birds', as the males have a pouch of skin under their wings in which the tiny young are carried, a feature unique amongst birds.



This is also a botanical wonderworld, the plant life adapted to both flood and dry seasons. As waters recede drought adapted plants emerge as the true survivors, including the Caranda, a native palm, with a deep root system, also vital for preventing soil erosion. More permanently moist soils are dominated by riparian vegetation, including Water Hyacinth, a common floating plant. At the time of our visit, glorious blooms from lapacho and piuva trees will be burgeoning, their yellow, pink or purple blooms, depending on species, offering a floral spectacle not to be missed. Abundant and exotic flowers attract large numbers and varieties of butterfly, many of which gather to take minerals at the edge of waterways.

Our sorties by boat will produce sightings of Yellow-billed Tern, Pied Lapwing and Collared Plover, as well as the unusual Black Skimmer shown overleaf. The Black Skimmer surfs low over waterways, its lower mandible open ready to detect prey such as fish, insects, crustaceans and molluscs. They can feed by both day and night and near Porto Jofre, are often to be found 'loafing' on sandbanks with groups with terns.



There are further chances of seeing Giant Otters as well as Capybaras, the world's largest rodent. Sometimes the rare South American Tapir, a herbivorous mammal with some resemblance to a pig with a short prehensile nose trunk, forage along the riverbanks.



Our private boat trips conclude with a return to the lodge for lunch, before we reembark each afternoon, though of course you can opt to stay around the grounds – there's lots to see here too of course. It is a rare privilege to sit by the pool and watch Wattled Jacanas, the strikingly plumaged Rufescent Tiger-herons (shown overleaf) and even Capybaras on the lily covered

lake, as well as a dazzling array of tanagers, tyrannulets, hummingbirds and woodcreepers from the surrounding forest. There is plenty to enjoy whilst searching for Jaguars!



As the days draw to a close, we can sit, drink in hand, watching the brilliant red sunsets around our lodge whilst Band-tailed Nighthawk fly through the lights of the garden. Nights Porto Jofre.



Day 11: Thursday 9 July. Today we must commence our return journey, but not before a final boat excursion for the elusive Jaguar. Since we have all day, and traffic is light, we can take

things steadily, revisiting our favourite locations along the Transpantaneira, catching up on any still wanted marvels previously unseen. The Campo Jofre is one such key area which we can easily fit into the schedule. This large wetland is just a few miles up the road and regularly hosts Maguari Stork and Nacunda Nighthawk. On warm days, it is a good place to search for Yellow Anaconda and other snakes which sometimes cross the road here.

As dusk falls, we reach Cuiaba city where over dinner, we will no doubt reflect on the many wonders of our stay in the Pantanal and the Chapada dos Guimaraes, our appetites whetted for even more sights that the vast country of Brazil has to offer the global naturalist. Night in Cuiaba.

Day 12: Friday 10 July. There will be no need to rush today, and we can have a gentle session of local bird watching before taking lunch and heading for Cuiaba airport where the main tour ends. Those of the group heading home will take an early evening flight to Sao Paulo ready for the overnight flight back to the UK.

EXTENSION TO THE AMAZON RAINFOREST

Friday 10 to Tuesday 14 July

Day 12: Friday 10 July. Following our overnight stay in Cuiaba, those staying for the extension to Amazonia, will take a mid-morning domestic flight from Cuiaba to the rainforest town of Alta Floresta, where we will be met and escorted to the Cristalino Lodge, a journey of one and half hours, initially by road and subsequently by boat. Prior to boarding we can pause at a regular 'stake-out' for Palmcreeper, a highly distinctive *Furnariidae* and the only member of its genus. This acrobatic species gleans insects from palm branches, often hanging upside down using its tail as a brace.

As we glide gently down the river, the full wonders of the Amazonian flora and fauna begin to reveal themselves amongst the astonishing sounds and colours of the rainforest.



The luxurious award winning Cristalino Lodge needs little introduction. Boasting a well-deserved reputation as one of the top eco-lodges within prime Amazonian rainforest, various trails and walkways will reveal an astonishing richness to the wildlife all around. The lodge is built on the banks of a tributary of the Teles Pires river which flows north to the mighty Amazon itself, and the only access is by boat, adding to its exclusivity. We have full board accommodation throughout our stay here. Three nights Cristalino Lodge.



Days 13 & 14: Saturday 11 & Sunday 12 July. Located in the threatened southern Amazon, some 52,000 hectares of rainforest are protected by the lodge, which in turn adjoins the two-million-hectare Cristalino State Park. With a list of birds and mammals the envy of many a site, we will be kept busy for the whole of our stay. Even the lodge grounds, with its trailing orchids and bromeliads are alive with wildlife, from family groups of Dusky-billed Parrotlet, that are best seen early in the morning to the Tawny-bellied Screech-owl and Blackish Nightjar that appear after dark. Several species of monkey can be seen including the endemic White-whiskered Spider Monkey, Tufted Capuchin, Spix's Red-handed Howler, White-nosed Saki and the rare Emilia's Marmoset.

During our two full days we will explore the forest trails on foot, offering chances to see the fantastic Amazonian Umbrellabird, the strictly nocturnal Crested Owl and the striking colours of the Blue-and-yellow Macaw. The number bird species will be quite overwhelming at times. Likely sightings include Red-throated Piping-guan, Razor-billed Curassow, Cryptic Forest-falcon, Spix's Woodcreeper, Tapajos Hermit, Amazonian Motmot, Swallow-winged Puffbird, Bare-necked Fruitcrow, Pompadour Cotinga, Saturnine Antshrike, Rufous-tailed Foliage-gleaner, Screaming Piha, Red-headed Manakin, Amazonian Royal Flycatcher, Flame-crested Tanager and Rose-breasted Chat, this being just a short list of the dozens of species on offer.

We will explore serene stretches of river by boat for Agami Heron and Green-and-rufous Kingfisher, both easier to see here than in the Pantanal, as well as an Amazonian speciality, the Zigzag Heron.



The stunning Agami Heron stalks prey in shallow and shaded waterways within forests

Two purpose-built towers with viewing platforms at differing levels enable guests to look into the forest canopy. It is here that we have the best chance to see raptors such as Plumbeous, Hook-billed and Double-toothed Kites, King Vulture and Ornate Hawk-eagle. A prize target might be Harpy Eagle of course, a pair of which breeds occasionally in the area.



An Ornate Hawk-eagle soars majestically above the forest

Botanically, the lodge is a true treasure trove with 1400 species of plant so far identified, and many more yet to be recorded. These include bromeliads, palms, epiphytes, vines, ferns, giant water lilies, strangler figs and orchids. The flora also provides a repository of ancestral knowledge, many plants such as guarana and copaiba have been used for centuries by local communities for their medicinal properties.

An excellent list of mammals frequents the rainforest too, though as ever we caution a bit of luck will be needed to see some of them. With patience, visitors do manage a selection of Lesser Anteater, Nine-banded Armadillo, the South American Tapir, Neotropical Otter, Red Brocket Deer, Grey Brocket Deer, White-lipped Peccary and Lowland Paca. Tayra, a long agile omnivorous mustelid, similar to a marten, can sometimes be spotted in the branches of the canopy. Prominent reptiles include the large Green Iguana and small Gold Tegu.



Lesser Anteater – a mainly nocturnal forager, but occasionally active by day

Whilst the sheer abundance of the fauna and flora can be overwhelming, we will endeavour to keep our schedule nicely paced, so we can all savour the experience of being in primary rainforest.

Day 15: Monday 13 July. Those wanting a final early morning stroll can wander the lodge grounds absorbing the Amazonian atmosphere for a final time. After breakfast we transfer back to Alta Floresta where we have lunch before embarking on a return flight to Cuiaba from where our journey home via Sao Paulo commences.

Day 16: Tuesday 14 July: Our flight arrives at London Heathrow mid-afternoon.

PRICE: For those joining us on the extension to the Amazon, full board accommodation is again included, starting with a one-night hotel stay in Cuiaba city prior to our flight to Alta Floresta, three nights at Cristalino Lodge and concluding with lunch at Alta Floresta airport prior to our onwards flights to Cuiaba and home.

The price is an additional £2995 pp, with a single room supplement of £350. We acknowledge that this is expensive, but to visit this highly rated establishment set amongst the wonders of

the Amazon, is quite possibly a once in a lifetime experience. Not included are the return domestic flights from Cuiaba to Alta Floresta.

Special thanks go to Andrew Ashworth, Andy Foster, Bob Martin and Ian Smith for use of their excellent photographs.

For a booking form, please see the booking page on www.birdingabroad.com

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Bare-necked Fruitcrow, a type of Cotinga which occurs only in the Amazon rainforest.



Capybaras are the largest living rodent in the world. Highly social and a superb underwater swimmer, they are capable of holding breath for five minutes at a time.



White-throated Piping-guan has a complex taxonomic background but is now considered a separate species from Blue-throated Piping-guan.



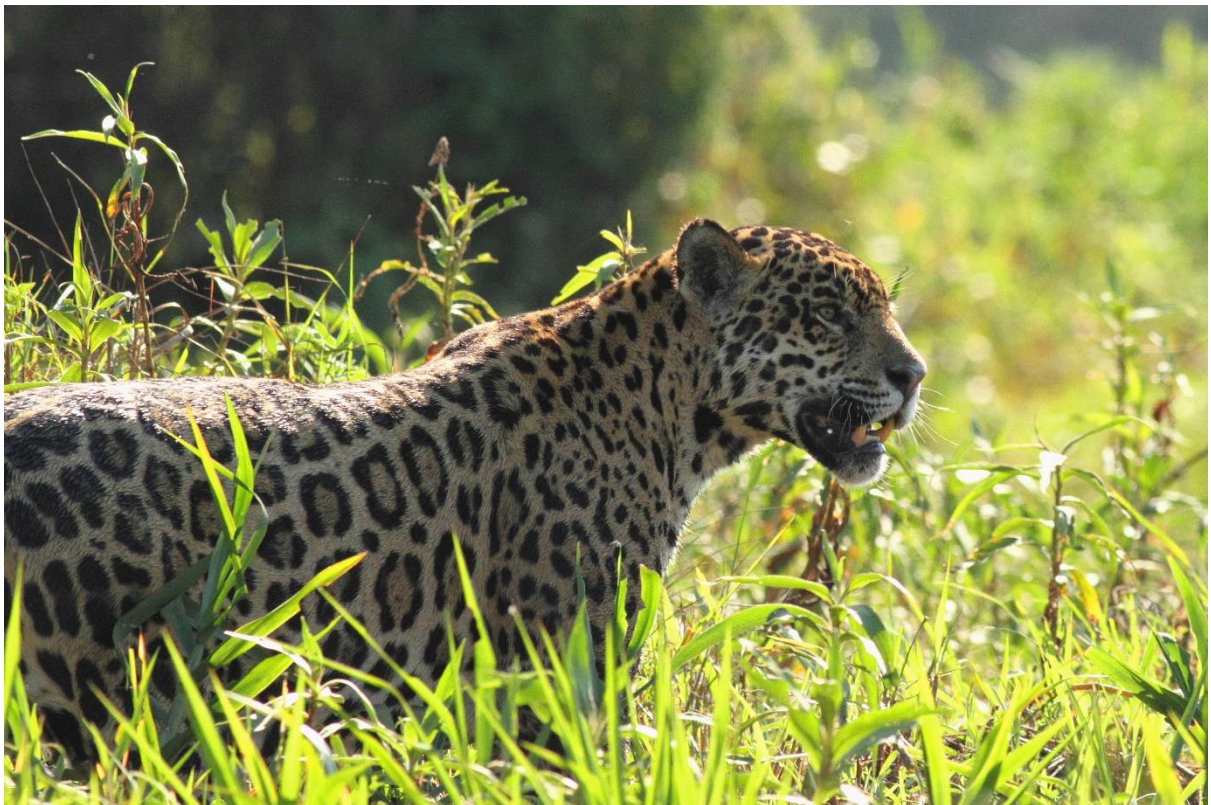
Blue-and-yellow Macaw, a declining species, once commonly kept in captivity due to its ability to 'talk'.



Mixed egrets being watched by an opportunistic Yacare Caiman, which could itself be the next meal for a Jaguar!



Hyacinth Macaw, what a beauty.



Jaguar, one of the stars of the show.