



## VENEZUELA

### ANGEL FALLS RIVER ADVENTURE

Venezuela's Tepuis — one of National Geographic Traveler's "50 Places of a Lifetime"

**DURATION** : 9 days / 8 nights (4 nights camping)  
**SEASON** : June through November  
**DEPARTURES** : Guaranteed with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 12 participants  
**TRIP RATING** : Moderate/Strenuous River Journey, Grade (III) - The highlight of this exciting program is an adventurous 4-day river expedition that includes day hikes of up to 3-4 hours duration, 4-5 hours navigating the rivers in open motorized canoes and sleeping in hammocks at night in native style *churuatas*, or thatch-roofed huts. Participants should know how to swim.

**2010 DATES** : On request for a minimum of 4 travelers

#### INTRODUCTION :

When contemplating Venezuela's *Lost World*, one envisions impenetrable forests, sparkling waterfalls and unusual wildlife. These thoughts are no doubt inspired by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's early twentieth-century novel, which is loosely based on explorers' accounts of the region that sparked his imagination. True to its exotic image, the Gran Sabana is spectacular! Multicolored rivers plunge thousands of feet off mountaintops and churn over sandstone platforms. Pink and orange-hued beaches glow in the sunset, and lush tropical forests shelter inland savannahs. This remote section of Venezuela was brought to the world's attention following Jimmy Angel's well-publicized adventure on the mesa called Auyán-tepui, or mountain of the god of evil. In search of gold, Angel and his party were unable to take off after their small plane bogged down in the soggy marshes on top of the tepui. They were forced to descend more than 2,000 feet through dense, rugged jungle. Ever since, the world's highest falls have born the name of this adventurer and are one of the best known destinations in South America.

This exciting journey takes us into the heart of this fascinating wilderness, traveling by boat to the foot of Angel Falls. We begin with an overnight stay in Caracas, then fly to Puerto Bolívar to catch a smaller plane to the Indian community of Kavac. Here, we begin our adventure with a day hike/swim into Kavac Canyon with its own secluded falls. The next morning we head out on the river in our motorized canoe. Our journey follows the Carrao River, then the Churún, into the impressive Devil's Canyon. From Ratoncito Island, we continue by foot to a lookout point with the best views of the world-renowned falls, whose name Kerepa-kupai-meru means "falls from the deepest place" in the native Pemón Indian language. After admiring and photographing this spectacular sight, we navigate downstream to the exotic tourist destination, Canaima. We spend the night in a comfortable lodge overlooking a gorgeous lagoon with a series of cascades, and fly over Angel Falls the next day, before returning to Caracas.

# Venezuela: Angel Falls River Adventure

## DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY:

DAY 01 (SAT): USA/CARACAS

We depart **Miami** (or another gateway) on a 4-hour, nonstop flight to Maiquetia, Venezuela's International Airport. We are met upon arrival and transferred to the Puerto Viejo hotel on the coast, about 20 minutes from the airport. Dinner is on your own tonight.

DAY 02 (SUN): CARACAS/CIUDAD BOLIVAR

We are picked up at the hotel after breakfast to return to the airport for the 1.5-hour flight to **Ciudad Bolívar**. An important port, formerly known as Angostura, or "narrow passage", because of its location at the narrowest point on the Orinoco River, this city still retains the special flavor of a river town. Upon arrival, we are transferred to the charming and comfortable Hostal Angostura, located downtown. This afternoon, we explore the city's colonial center, including a stop at the Cathedral, a visit to the house which was Simón Bolívar's headquarters during the campaign for independence (it's now a museum), and a walk along the river front with our guide. Tonight we have a trip briefing and welcome dinner. Lunch is on your own. (B,D)

DAY 03 (MON): CIUDAD BOLIVAR/KAVAC

Following breakfast this morning, we catch a chartered flight (1 hour and 45 minutes) to the Pemón Indian village of Kavac. En route, weather permitting, we overfly **Auyán-tepui** (7,872'), the massive 270-square-mile, flat-topped mesa from whose summit plunges the world's highest waterfall. **Angel Falls** has a 3,281-foot drop - sixteen times higher than Niagara Falls! With luck, we have our first glimpse of this impressive sight, priming us for the adventure ahead! We land at **Kavac**, settle into our camp and have a short introductory hike along a nature trail, identifying various tree & flower species, butterflies, and frogs. Arriving to Kavac Canyon, we wade through its narrow gorge to a secluded pool, where we enjoy a refreshing dip beneath the waterfall at the canyon's end. We return to Kavac on a side trail, passing by a lovely cascade called Tawanaremba. Once in camp, we prepare for a barbecue lunch. In the afternoon, we follow another scenic trail for an hour's hike through the surrounding savannah to the source of Kavac Falls. Tonight we sleep native-style, in mosquito-netted hammocks hung under a typical *churuata*, or a thatch-roofed shelter, similar to those used by the local residents. (B,L,D)

DAY 04 (TUE): KAVAC/ IWANA MERU

Early risers may watch as the sun's first rays strike the eastern face of Auyán-tepui this morning, enjoying the play of light on the colorful sandstone. Following breakfast, we board an open 4x4 vehicle and drive for about 1 hour to the village of Kamarata. At the river, we meet our expedition crew and load our gear into motorized dugout canoes called *curiaras*. Our journey to Angel Falls begins! We navigate down the **Akanán River**, on the east side of Auyán-tepui. Traveling along the river in an open canoe provides the perfect opportunity to observe the wild, tropical nature surrounding us, as well as some native settlements. Birds we may encounter in the vegetation along the river banks or in the tallest trees include the rufescent tiger heron, Amazon kingfisher, black-tailed trogon, black cormorant, woodpeckers and green ibis. Although we pass through two small, Class II rapids as we head downstream, this excursion is considered safe for even the inexperienced river traveler. Our lunch break is taken by the Aymara Kara or Ku rapids. We arrive to our camp, **Iwana Meru**, just across from the rapids of the same name, with time for a short nature walk towards the Indian village of Peipa. On occasion the locals may have baskets, blow guns and other crafts available for purchase. Tonight we again sleep native-style in hammocks. **River travel:** Approx. 3 hours. (B,L,D)

DAY 05 (WED): ARENAL

After a hearty breakfast, we continue navigating down the Akanán River for a short distance before arriving to a trailhead. We hike for one hour across the grasslands - a perfect chance to stretch our legs and view the Amaruay Tepui and the changing landscape that includes dry savannah and tropical rainforest. Our *curiara* picks us up at the end of the trail. Back on the river, we continue heading downstream by motorboat to the confluence with the larger, swifter Carrao River. At this point, the densely vegetated Apauaray Tepui dominates our view. The closer we come to the mesa's steep sides, the wilder, more pristine our surroundings and we observe birds such as the roadside hawk, scarlet macaw, aninga, wattled guan, crested caracara and black vulture. Travel along the Carrao is exciting. As our staff navigates through various rapids we walk alongside the river, following the shore or inland trails. The *Estrechura* or *Perwa* rapids, which we encounter this afternoon, are the most spectacular of the entire route. At the end of the day, we are closer to the mouth of the Río Churún and hang our hammocks at an old miner's camp called **Arenal**. We enjoy superb panoramas of the Wei-tepui (Sun's Plateau) and the northern walls of the vast Auyán-tepui. **River travel:** Approx. 4 hours. (B,L,D)

## Venezuela: Angel Falls River Adventure

### DAY 06 (THU): ANGEL FALLS/ARENAL

Leaving very early this morning, we navigate down the Carrao to the confluence with the Río Churún, then head up to the **Devil's Canyon** - a spectacular gorge with soaring vertical walls, covered in sections by dense tropical vegetation. Numerous small streams and cascades flow down its faces. Our route follows the river that receives the waters of Angel Falls. Since the Churún begins on the summit of Auyán-tepui, water levels in this river can rise or fall dramatically (several feet in only a few hours) according to the amount of rain falling on top of the plateau. In some places we may pass small rapids or have to push the canoes through knee to thigh-deep water. We should arrive to Ratoncito Island after about 2.5 hours of exciting navigation. From here we face a demanding 1.5-hour uphill hike through tropical (occasionally dense) vegetation, to reach the *Mirador Laimé* lookout point. We are rewarded with our first close-up view of **Angel Falls**, whose waters free-fall 2,650' through the air before crashing into the rocks below! After time to admire and photograph this initial vista (the falls face east so the morning is ideal), we may continue hiking another 30 minutes to a hidden pool and take a dip at the base of the falls. We return to our canoes, navigate back to the **Arenal** camp and spend the night in our hammocks. **River travel:** Approx. 4.5 hours. (B,L,D)

### DAY 07 (FRI): CANAIMA

Following breakfast, we load our canoes and navigate back down the Río Carrao toward **Canaima**. Along the way, we pass Orchid Island and observe the landscape changing to rolling hills and drier savannah with shorter trees. In order to pass the long, technical section of rapids called Mayupa, we disembark and hike for about a half hour (our staff handles the navigation with just our gear in the boats). Back on the river, we continue navigating to the trailhead for the hike to **El Sapo Falls**. Here we are refreshed by the spray of the seven cascades as we walk behind the waterfall. We return to the river and arrive to the Port of Ucaima where we say goodbye to our crew and drive a short distance to Canaima, located at a peaceful lagoon on the Carrao River and surrounded by exotic cascades such as the Hacha and Ucaima falls. It is a magnificent setting and the ideal spot to end our adventures. During the first decades of the twentieth-century, the Canaima area was visited by those searching for gold and diamonds, including Jimmy Angel. According to Pemón Indian legend, it is the dwelling place of the god Kanaimo. Spending time relaxing on the lovely white sand beach, one can understand why a god would choose to live in such an incredibly picturesque place! This evening we enjoy a special dinner with our guide. **River travel:** Approx. 4 hours. (B,L,D)

### DAY 08 (SAT): CANAIMA/CARACAS

The morning is at leisure to relax on the beach, contemplate the wondrous surroundings, take a short boat ride in the lagoon, or do some handicraft shopping in the village before we catch the noon flight to **Caracas**. Located at 3,150' in a temperate valley of the coastal sierra, Caracas' modern architecture is dramatically accented by Mount Avila and Pico Naiguata, the highest peak in the range at 9,071'. We are transferred to the familiar Puerto Viejo hotel. A farewell dinner at a typical restaurant is included this evening. (B,D)

### DAY 09 (SUN): CARACAS/USA

We transfer to the airport this morning and have check-in assistance for our international flight back to **Miami**. (B)

**NOTES ON THE ITINERARY:** Although we do our best to adhere to the schedule listed above, the day-by-day activities on this itinerary are subject to change for numerous reasons beyond our control including group pace/interests, weather, road/river/trail conditions and flight schedules. Driving, navigating, hiking distances and altitudes are approximate, and times indicated are NET, they do not include lunch breaks, rest stops, time to explore the forest, etc. Due to the rugged nature of this expedition as well as the occasional necessity of having to push the canoe through rapids or shallow sections of the river or walk around rapids, this program is not advisable for young or inexperienced children under 12 years of age.

On **Day 02** if there are no flights available to Ciudad Bolívar we'll fly to nearby Puerto Ordaz and drive for about 1 hour to Ciudad Bolívar. The rainy season (mid-May through mid-December) is the ideal time to view the falls from below due to the huge volume of water cascading down from the summit. Unfortunately rainy weather also means that there may be misty days or cloud-cover around the tepui. This often adds to the exotic setting but requires patience from those waiting for the best views. Approximately 60% of the time, only partial views or sections of the Angel Falls are visible, but at least 95% of our guests on this trip are very satisfied with their views of the Devil's Canyon and the falls.

## Venezuela: Angel Falls River Adventure

<b>2010 LAND COST:</b>	\$3,725 p.p.d. (4-6 participants)
	\$3,515 p.p.d. (7-12 participants)
	\$ 415 Single Supplement

p.p.d.= per person based on double occupancy

### SERVICES INCLUDED:

- Comprehensive **pre-departure planning packet** and expert travel advice.
- All **in-country transfers** as scheduled (transfers on different days are additional). Ground transportation in spacious and comfortable private vehicles with professional drivers.
- Local and return flight reconfirmation, **in-country airport check-in and luggage assistance**.
- The chartered Ciudad Bolívar/Kavac flight (aboard a Cessna 206 with 5-seats or similar aircraft) and the regular Servivensa/Avensa flight Canaima/Puerto Ordaz/Caracas.
- All **accommodations in standard-class (4 star) hotels** or lodges as listed (or at similar hotels) on a shared basis with private bath. Double beds for couples (primarily queen-sized) can be requested in advance, but cannot be guaranteed, as most hotels offer few rooms with double beds.
- Single Supplement provides single room accommodations in all hotels. Due to the limited number of rooms at the Canaima lodges, there is a maximum of 2 singles allowed per group. If you require single accommodations, making reservations well in advance is recommended.
- All **meals** indicated on the itinerary (B=breakfast; L=lunch; D=dinner). **Vegetarian diets accommodated** on request (advance notification required).
- All **guided tours** (as listed) conducted on a private basis by knowledgeable, English-speaking local guides (includes applicable entrance fees). Private bus and boat transportation where applicable.
- A local, **English-speaking guide-escort** for the program (Days 02-09).
- Standard **expedition service to Angel Falls** including:
  - Transportation in open, motorized boats with expert river captain and a boatman.
  - Experienced Pemón Indian assistant.
  - Hammocks and blankets on the *churuatas*, or thatch-roofed huts
  - All meals: Hot breakfast, picnic lunch, and served dinner prepared by an expedition cook.
  - First-aid kit and life vests.

### NOT INCLUDED:

- US domestic, International flights, nor the Caracas-Ciudad Bolívar flight.
- Local Venezuelan airport departure taxes (approx. \$100 per person).
- Tours, meals, accommodations or other services not listed on the itinerary.
- Two-three (2-3) meals at about \$20 each, nor alcoholic beverages.
- Tips to the local staff.
- Sleeping bag liner, other personal gear, nor items of a personal nature like laundry or phone calls.
- Expenses incurred in preparing for this program such as, but not limited to, non-refundable airline tickets or traveler's insurance, and additional expenses resulting from flight delays, schedule changes, cancellations, or missed connections.

**TRAVEL INSURANCE:** We strongly recommend that you consider a plan to help protect your trip investment. Travel insurance helps to cover; unexpected events prior to departure causing the need to cancel or change your dates, weather events or local strikes causing interruption or changes to your itinerary, missed connections, delayed arrival, lost/delayed baggage and medical or evacuation coverage. We provide a plan through Travel Insured International (TII), information and application are sent upon receipt of your deposit (sooner if requested). Policies can be purchased securely online at: [www.southwindadventures.com/insurance.html](http://www.southwindadventures.com/insurance.html). If you or a family member has a pre-existing medical condition, you will want to purchase the TII policy within 14 days of your deposit to qualify for reimbursement of non-refundable costs if a recurrence of the pre-existing condition forces you to cancel your trip (some restrictions apply). Please call our office or visit our website for more information.

## Venezuela: Angel Falls River Adventure

**OPTIONAL TRIP EXTENSIONS:** We can arrange extra days for those wanting to visit the *llanos* for superb wildlife viewing, to explore the Andes for scenic beauty, or to relax under the sun on the beaches of the Caribbean coast. All extensions require a minimum of 2 participants and an additional deposit according to the length of the extension. To request our **2009 Venezuela: Summary of Trip Extensions**, please call us at **800-377-9463**, email, or view them on our website by clicking on *Trips>Angel Falls River Adventure>Extend Your Trip*.

**GUIDES: Juan Carlos Ramirez** – A former tennis player, Juan Carlos turned to hiking, climbing, mountain biking and exploring as a way to stay in shape following a broken collar bone. He loved the forest and wildlife so much that adventure became his way of life, and he and his partner started Akanan Tours in 1991. A licensed naturalist guide, he has been leading groups since 1986 and has accompanied several scientific expeditions with Venezuela's leading explorer and Yanomani expert, Charles Brewer Carias. His love and understanding of nature and respect for the native cultures is contagious.

**Arturo Garcia** - Business administrator, photographer, director of a local conservation publication and naturalist guide, Arturo can easily be called a renaissance man! He is a certified NOLS (National Outdoor Leadership School) instructor that has been leading trips into the Gran Sabana since 1993 (often departures to Roraima or Angel Falls), and has hiked or climbed throughout Venezuela and several parts of the world.

**WEATHER:** Due to its proximity to the equator and the Caribbean Sea, Venezuela experiences warm tropical and subtropical weather patterns year round and its climate is generally conducive to vacationing. The country's dry season runs from December through May with rains starting in early June and continuing through October/November. The rivers leading to the foot of Angel Falls can only be navigated during the rainy season so the chances of rain showers **are very high** on any of the departures. **Caracas** has a year-round average temperature of about 74°F with daytime highs reaching 88-90°F in July and August (nights are a pleasant 60-65°) and lows of 40°F in January. The **Gran Sabana** and **Angel Falls** regions are very tropical (hot and humid) with temperatures averaging between 85-95°F during the day. Humidity in this area is high (70% and above) and it rains frequently, but not for long periods of time.

**ESTIMATED AIRFARE:** The Land Cost for this trip DOES NOT INCLUDE THE USA-CARACAS-USA or CARACAS-CIUDAD BOLIVAR FLIGHTS. The **international** air from US gateways; Miami (American), Houston (Continental) and Atlanta (Delta) to Caracas is about \$700-900 round-trip. The **local flight** within Venezuela (Caracas-Ciudad Bolivar) is about \$100-150 per person. Upon receipt of your deposit, Southwind will send you more information about booking your flights to match your land itinerary.

✉ Southwind will need your flight schedule 45 days prior to departure to arrange transfers. It is important to **NOT** purchase any airline tickets until your trip is guaranteed to operate. Southwind sends a trip confirmation letter once a trip is guaranteed, you can also call to check the status of your departure.

**HOW TO SIGN UP:** Submit Southwind's Trip Reservation Form along with a \$1,000 per person per trip deposit (payable by check or credit card). The form and deposit can be completed securely online at [www.southwindadventures.com](http://www.southwindadventures.com) by clicking on "Book a Trip" at the top of our homepage. If you prefer, you can print the Trip Reservation Form and mail/fax it to our office with your deposit. You can also call us at 1-800-377-9463 to make payment arrangements (**your deposit will be charged and your reservation confirmed once we receive your Trip Reservation Form**). Due to the popularity of Venezuela's Gran Sabana, we recommend making reservations 4 to 6 months in advance. Once your trip is guaranteed to operate, you will receive a comprehensive pre-departure packet.

**Land Balance:** Final payment is due at 90 days by Visa, Mastercard, Discover, American Express or check. You will receive a trip invoice indicating your balance due. Provided services and space are available, reservations can be accepted up to 21 days before departure.

Cancellation Fees and other policies are outlined under the 2010 Terms & Conditions on Southwind's website (click [Book a Trip>2010 Terms & Conditions](#)).

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