



## B R A Z I L

### PANTANAL NATURE SAFARI

A Journey into the World's Largest Wetlands



<b>DURATION:</b>	10 days / 9 nights
<b>SEASON:</b>	April - November
<b>DEPARTURES:</b>	Guaranteed with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 12 participants
<b>TRIP RATING:</b>	Moderate Wildlife Adventure, Grade (II) - This exciting hotel & ecolodge-based program includes optional paddle canoe excursions, nature hikes and horseback riding (2-3 hours duration) plus overland & motorboat travel of up to 4 hours at a time.

**2012 DATES:** On request any week during the months of June-August for a minimum of 4 travelers and subject to availability. Available the rest of the season for a minimum of 10 travelers.

#### INTRODUCTION:

Declared as a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 2000, the Pantanal is one of nature's last frontiers. Nearly 89,000 square miles, within three countries - Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay, contain the greatest concentrations of fauna in the western hemisphere. Most of the region is not easily accessed, so many of its tranquil rivers and lakes, lush forests, expansive savannas and vast wetlands are still pristine. The climate, a challenging cycle of seasonal flooding followed by months of drought, makes the Pantanal a truly unique environment. More than 650 species of birds; 260 types of fish; 80 species of mammals, including a variety of monkeys, giant anteaters, giant otters, marsh deer and tapirs; plus 50 species of reptiles have been recorded. The variety of species found here may not equal the Amazon, but often the number of individuals of each species spotted at one time is exceptional. Rather than seeing one or two, here we can usually observe dozens! During a typical week, exploring the open, veldt-like landscape or dense gallery forests lining the rivers and lakes, our small groups can easily observe up to 260 species of birds, with many individuals of each, including the rare hyacinth macaw, hundreds of caiman, dozens of capybara, two to four different species of monkeys, iguanas, tapir, deer, anteaters and with luck, jaguar or puma! Photographers can count on upclose wildlife, beautiful sunsets and expansive vistas.

Designed for nature lovers, outdoor enthusiasts, and anyone wanting to experience South America's best natural history destination, this adventure begins with a flight to Rio de Janeiro and a couple days to savor the delightful juxtaposition of modern city, stunning beaches and exuberant tropical environment. Next we fly to Campo Grande, southern gateway to the Pantanal, and drive through pasturelands dotted with rheas, ibises, storks and herons to the Caiman Ecological Refuge, a private ranch/reserve that is our base for five days of incredible wildlife viewing. Staying at one of the ranch's two charming guest houses, both situated within a different ecosystem on the property, we enjoy nature walks, jeep safaris, horseback riding and boat journeys all designed to enhance our experience and maximize our opportunities to spot animals. Returning to Campo Grande, we fly back to Rio (or extend to Foz do Iguacu) and enjoy a final night on the town before heading home.

# Brazil: Pantanal Nature Safari

## DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY:

DAY 01 (THU): USA/RIO DE JANEIRO

We depart on an overnight flight to **Rio**, one of the most beautiful cities on earth.

DAY 02 (FRI): RIO DE JANEIRO

We are met upon arrival in **Rio de Janeiro** and transferred to the Hotel Rio Atlantica on the lovely Copacabana beach in one of the city's affluent suburbs. Following lunch on our own, we meet our local guide for a city tour. Our visit to the *Cidade Maravilhosa*, or Marvelous City, founded by the Portuguese in 1567, begins with a drive along the beach to the Urca quarter. Boarding a cable car, we take a spectacular ride to the top of Rio's best known landmark, *Pão de Açúcar* (Sugar Loaf Hill), standing 1,300' above Guanabara Bay. From the top we have a superb view of the entire city. Next, we head to the *Centro*, or downtown section, to visit some important historical sites. Stops include the Metropolitan cathedral, the Imperial Palace and a walk on the old Rio streets. This evening's dinner at a typical restaurant and a samba show complete our welcome to South America's most vibrant city. (D)

DAY 03 (SAT): RIO DE JANEIRO

After a leisurely breakfast at the hotel, we enjoy a van tour and nature hike in **Tijuca National Park**, home to 46 square miles of tropical jungles; all that is left of the forest once surrounding Rio de Janeiro. The contrast between the urban center of Copacabana and the park, less than 30 minutes away, with its exuberant green forest, lofty peaks, waterfalls and creeks, has to be experienced to be believed. Birdlife is abundant, as are iguanas and monkeys. Next, we visit **Corcovado Mountain** where the statue of Christ the Redeemer overlooks the city. We have lunch in a local *Churrascaria* restaurant and return to the comforts of the Rio Atlantica to enjoy the rest of the afternoon on Rio's renowned beaches or do some personal sightseeing. Dinner is on your own to try Rio's great variety of restaurants. (B,L)

DAY 04 (SUN): RIO/CAMPO GRANDE/CAIMAN ECOLOGICAL REFUGE

Returning to the airport this morning, we check-in for our flight to **Campo Grande**, gateway to the vast flooded plain of the southern Pantanal, approximately half the size of France. Upon arrival to the capital of the Mato Grosso Do Sul state, we meet our local staff and begin a 3-hour drive by private vehicle to Pousada Caiman, which was founded in 1912 and will be our base for the next 4 days. Originally part of a 131,000 acre ranch, the owners of the Pousada have set aside nearly 18,000 acres as an ecological preserve dedicated to scientific research and ecotourism. The guest facilities are divided between two lodges (accommodating a total of 22 guests in double rooms, all with private bathrooms, ceiling fans and air conditioning). The lodges are self-supporting with spacious living and dining rooms, bar, restaurant and a swimming pool. Lodges allow access to remote sections of the reserve, and each are located within a particular ecosystem on the property. Either guest house may be used on any departure, according to the ranch's capacity. Upon arrival we enjoy a late lunch, then board a 4x4 safari vehicle for our introduction to one of the richest wildlife habitats on the planet. During our 2-3 hour outing, we may see greater rheas, or emas as they are called locally, toco toucans, jabiru storks, giant anteaters, pampas deer, and a variety of colorful parrots. As the sun sets, the *pantaneiros* return their horses to the corrals and we retire to the lodges for a delicious welcome dinner and trip briefing by our resident guide. **Driving distance:** 147 miles or 3 hours (last 19 miles is on dirt roads). (B,L,D)

DAY 05 (MON): CAIMAN ECOLOGICAL REFUGE

Those who rise early can enjoy a beautiful sunrise and watch as the birds leave their roosts for a day of feeding. After breakfast, our first guided hike follows trails through typical Pantanal vegetation like long grass and coppice, through transitional open pasture lands between ecosystems, or through dense forests. Hikes make it easy to observe animals within the forest vegetation, such as "coatis" (raccoon-like mammals) and monkeys, and to distinguish a large variety of animals and plants. We listen to the cries of birds, like the boisterous daybreak greeting of the great kiskadee, or the repetitious call of the oven bird. Our guide points out different plant species, animal tracks in the moist soil, and a variety of insects. Returning to the lodge for lunch, we have time to relax during the midday heat when wildlife is not very active. Later in the afternoon we explore the bay by canoe. As we silently paddle near the shore, we may observe caiman, capybara or monkeys with close-up photographic opportunities. We also watch the birds that feed on water fauna, including cormorants, darters, white-headed terns, and different types of herons. We listen for the hoarse, throaty call of the wood stork or splash as an anhinga, or neo-tropical cormorant, dives into the lake. At dusk, we are treated to songs of toucans, herons, parakeets, jacanas and kingfishers. We might spot a deer or anteater coming to the water's edge for a drink, and watch as flocks of birds return to their roosts as the fading sun sinks to the horizon. Following dinner at the lodge, our guide will discuss the ecology of the Pantanal and identification of local flora and fauna. One evening there will be a slide show highlighting the ecology and life in the Pantanal. (B,L,D)

## Brazil: Pantanal Nature Safari

### DAY 06 (TUE): CAIMAN ECOLOGICAL REFUGE

This morning, we may mount horses for an optional ride through the reserve. This is one of the best ways to explore the Pantanal, allowing for visits to flooded areas where the water is too deep for motorized vehicles or too shallow for boats. The local horses are stout and strong with skin adapted to crossing long distances in flooded fields. They are trained for inexperienced riders, making it easy for everyone to enjoy this typical aspect of life in the Pantanal. Before we set out basic instructions are provided. During our ride we enjoy plenty of opportunities to spot birds and wildlife such as the rhea, or South American ostrich, howler monkeys and deer. Our guide will help us understand the special rhythms of the Pantanal as well as how the seasonal floods have contributed to the region's rich diversity of wildlife. Following lunch, our afternoon excursion is a photographic safari by specialized open vehicle through this fascinating environment. We may spot coatis, anteaters, peccaries, capybara, storks, hawks, macaws and toucans among others. Brown capuchin and black and gold howler monkeys frequent the gallery forest. Following dinner this evening we head out for some "night spotting" to observe nocturnal animals such as alligators, capybaras, tapirs, ocelots and crab-eating foxes. (B,L,D)

### DAYS 07 (WED): CAIMAN ECOLOGICAL REFUGE

Early risers at the Cordilheira lodge can climb a 30-foot tower for a pre-dawn birdwatching excursion, and those at the Baiazinha might enjoy a motorboat outing in the bay for some birding. Among the thousands of birds that come to the Pantanal during the main nesting season (July- September), species we can hope to observe include the snail kite, hawks (black-collared, roadside and savannah), cardinals (yellow-billed and red-capped), lined woodpeckers, ringed kingfishers, monk parakeets, black-capped mocking thrushes and wattled jacanas. After breakfast one morning, we take the Aquidauana River tour, starting with a photo-safari/drive from the lodge to the Aquidauana River. We must cross the entire farm from south to north (distance varies depending which lodge). Once we reach the river, a motorboat ride allows us to observe the riverside forest with its typical species. This is the wildest and most remote part of the farm, so there is a good chance of seeing rare animals like tapir, otter and even the jaguar. *Pau-de-novato* trees line the river banks with their clusters of pink or red blossoms. Their name derives from the fact that someone unfamiliar with the area (a novice or *novato*) may be unaware of the tree's symbiotic relationship with ants. Should someone try to cut it down or hang their hammock from it, the plants' movements cause hundreds of tiny ants to fall, their sting burning like fire. We return to the lodge for lunch. An afternoon excursion takes us to an area where we can photograph the clumsy *tuiuiu*, or jabiru stork, whose black-hood and scarlet collar have become symbolic of the Pantanal. Mammals we might spot include the rare giant river otter (which can weigh up to 70 pounds), pampas and marsh deer, black howler monkeys, wild boar, tapir, and capybara (the world's largest rodent). This latter creature is one of the most frequently observed species in the Pantanal with participants commonly sighting family groups consisting of 2 adults and 4-5 young. Other mammals found in this fascinating region, but harder to see, include giant and lesser anteaters, yellow anacondas, iguanas, puma and jaguar. Another morning we'll enjoy a walk through the farm beginning at the ranch house. This includes a visit to the stable near the *pantaneiros* quarters. Hyacinth macaws frequent the trees around the corrals and fill the morning air with their calls. At the headquarters of the Hyacinth Macaw Project, we learn about the dedicated biologists working to protect this critically endangered species. This evening, there will be a special barbecue dinner to celebrate our last night in the Pantanal, where we might try a *caipicaíman*, the lodges' special cocktail. (B,L,D)

### DAY 08 (THU): CAIMAN ECOLOGICAL REFUGE /RIO

Today we enjoy our final morning of wildlife viewing. At midday, we return by vehicle to **Campo Grande**. Along the way, we watch for sprinting herds of rheas and enjoy views of *cambara*, with its yellow flowers or *piuva* trees, whose lovely purple, lilac and pink blossoms embellish the landscape in July and August. We might spot a flock of Blue-and-Yellow macaws eating fruit at the top of an *acuri palm*, or watch as a Pantanal cowboy moves his herd from one pasture to another. Arriving to the airport we check in for our flight to **Rio de Janeiro**, where we're met and transferred to the elegant Rio Atlantica Hotel. This evening, dinner is on your own to try some of the gourmet restaurants in town. (B)

### DAY 09 (FRI): RIO/USA

Today is at leisure for final shopping, relaxing on the beaches or revisiting the city on your own (day-room provided at the hotel for your comfort). This evening, we are picked up at the hotel and transferred to the airport and assisted with check-in for the international flight home. (B)

### DAY 10 (SAT): USA

Early morning arrival in the USA.

## Brazil: Pantanal Nature Safari

**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, weather, and road/lake/river conditions. This itinerary is flexible to accommodate each group's particular interests and to assure the best possible wildlife and bird viewing opportunities. Although wildlife viewing is carefully pursued, spotting specific wildlife species or certain quantities of animals cannot be guaranteed.

Accommodations and activities at the Caiman Ecological Refuge vary according to the season and availability of space. Caiman Ecological Refuge reserves the right to accommodate travelers in any of their 2 facilities and guests may stay at more than one lodge during the course of their stay. This program is suitable for physically fit participants accustomed to outdoor activities age 8 and up. Driving/navigating distances and altitudes are approximate, and times indicated are NET. They don't include lunch breaks, rest stops, time to explore the surroundings, etc.

During the months of January-June & September-December, the Caiman Ecological Refuge has designated reservations under a new concept, private guest houses or villas for groups only with a minimum of 10 guests traveling together. Groups of 10 or more travelers can choose any check-in or check-out dates. Another option for parties fewer than 10 visiting the Pantanal during the season is to base from the Araras EcoLodge outside Cuiaba, contact our office for further details.

**2012 LAND COST:**                   \$4,295 p.p.d. (4-6 participants)  
  \$4,045 p.p.d. (7-12 participants)  
  \$2,895 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**.
- All **accommodations in First-Class (4-5 star) hotels** as listed (or similar hotels) on a shared basis with private bath. Double beds for couples (primarily queen-size) can be requested in advance, but cannot be guaranteed, as the hotels offer few rooms with double beds.
- **Accommodations and tours at Caiman Ecological Refuge**. Morning and afternoon activities are followed by an evening slide show and/or video presentation or nocturnal spotlighting. Seasons and weather determine the destinations for each excursion. You will join other travelers staying at the facilities for all activities.
- Single Supplement provides single room accommodations in all hotels. Due to the limited number of rooms at the small Caiman Ecological Refuge lodges, there is a maximum of 2 singles allowed per group. If you require single accommodations, making reservations well in advance is recommended.
- Environmental fee for the private reserve at Caiman Ecological Refuge.
- All **meals** indicated in the itinerary (B=breakfast; L=lunch; D=dinner). **Vegetarian diets accommodated** on request (advance notification required). For other diets, consult your travel specialist before making a reservation.
- 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.

### NOT INCLUDED:

- US domestic, international, nor local flights within Brazil (airpass available within Brazil)
- Visa for entry to Brazil (approx. \$160 per person)
- Four (4) meals at about \$25 each
- Tours or other services not listed on the itinerary.
- Alcoholic beverages nor items of a personal nature; such as clothing, equipment, laundry & phone calls.
- Tips to the local staff.
- Expenses incurred in preparation 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.

## Brazil: Pantanal Nature Safari

**TRAVEL INSURANCE:** We strongly recommend purchasing a plan to protect your trip investment. Travel insurance helps to cover unexpected events prior to departure causing the need to cancel or change your dates. Weather, geologic events, local strikes, a personal injury/illness to you, family member or your traveling companion could cause interruption or changes to your itinerary, missed connections, delayed arrival, lost/delayed baggage or need for medical attention on the trip or evacuation which is why coverage is important. We recommend the *Worldwide Trip Protector (WTP)* plan offered by Travel Insured International (TII). **Kids 17 and under are free with related adult on the WTP plan.** Information and an 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, your traveling companion or a family member has a pre-existing medical condition, you should purchase the WTP policy within 21 days of your deposit in order to be reimbursed for non-refundable costs if a recurrence of the condition forces you to cancel your trip (some restrictions apply). Please call our office or visit our website for more information.

**ESTIMATED AIRFARE:** The Land Cost for this trip DOES NOT INCLUDE ANY FLIGHTS. Round-trip **international** airfare from US gateways (JFK, Miami, Dallas, Houston, Atlanta) to Rio de Janeiro is about \$900-\$1,200 per person (not including in-country flights within Brazil). **In-country flights** (Rio-Campo Grande-Rio) are estimated at \$275-\$450 per person (less if combined with international ticket or a Brazil airpass). Airlines offering non-stop service to Rio include United/Continental, American, Delta, TAM Brazilian. 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.

### CAIMAN ECOLOGICAL REFUGE:

**Baiazinha Lodge** - With bold architecture, built over a bay of crystal clear water and vegetation, this lodge is located 5.5 miles from the ranch house. Pousada Baiazinha has 6 bedrooms, each with a balcony, screen doors, air conditioning, ceiling fan, private bathroom, hot water, and 110 volt outlets. The kitchen provides guests with a delicious menu of international and regional dishes. Guests have direct contact with the cooks and may suggest repeating their favorite dishes. From the living room, there is an ample view of the bay and the luxurious jungle surrounding it. From the deck or the pool, a natural aquarium is visible, and from the top of the observation tower one can overlook the Pantanal as far as the eye can see. The sunrise over the water delights early risers. Capybara and birds abound on the grounds of the lodge. Here, nature is all encompassing with its sounds, colors, shapes and movements.

**Cordilheira Lodge** - Hidden inside the Pantanal, this facility was built with sophisticated and cozy architecture surrounded by forest. Wherever a person looks, he or she can see towering trees and the plants and animals they shelter. Eight miles from the ranch house, the Cordilheira has 5 bedrooms, each with a balcony with screen doors, air conditioning, ceiling fans, private bathrooms, hot water and 110 volt outlets. In the kitchen, the international and regional dishes are prepared with perfection by on-site cooks. From the living room or the observation tower, wildlife can be seen throughout the day. From each bedroom, all one needs to do is open the balcony and the discovery of the Pantanal begins!

**Ranch House** - Constructed in Spanish-American style, is currently the owner's quarters and hasn't lost the charm of the "Casa Grande" of a typical farm in the Pantanal. The nearby villa and mango grove (built and planted by the *pantaneiros* or cowboys who work with the ranch's cattle), richly illustrate the local culture. It also houses the operational offices of Caiman Ecological Refuge.

**WEATHER:** From December through March, the Pantanal lowland is inundated with water from intense rains. Flooding causes mammals to seek refuge on higher grounds, known as Cordilheiras. The temperature and humidity are high, vegetation is exuberant, and many species of birds nest. Daytime temperatures are in the upper 80's and 90's and nights are in the upper 70's, unless an evening shower cools the air to the low 70's.

From April through June, rains are moderate and water levels recede. From July through September, skies are free from clouds, and daytime temperatures are 10°-15° cooler than during the wet season. The average high is 82°, with nights in the 60's and low 70's. In October and November, the Pantanal resembles a dry African Savannah.

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### WHEN TO GO:

**April** - This is a spectacular month. Water levels are high and the region is full of flowering plants. The rains are less frequent and you can easily go an entire week without precipitation. There is a marked increase in nocturnal wildlife. Many feel this is one of the most beautiful times to be in the Pantanal and, apart from Holy Week, there are few tourists in the area.

**May** - Early in the month the water levels start to drop, sometimes as much as several inches a day. Skies are clear and many flowers are still in bloom. A few flowering trees are starting to show color. The best attraction is the start of the bird migration. Located on three migratory routes, the Pantanal is a birder's paradise. Also, as water levels decrease, many fish and small amphibians become trapped in shrinking pools. This phenomenon produces abundant food for the millions of birds that start to arrive in the last half of the month. Temperatures are cooler during the day (80's) and quite comfortable at night (low 70's), and the skies remain clear.

**June** - The migration is now in full swing—estimates indicate that several million birds come to roost in this region. Vegetation is still quite green and the skies are clear. Great numbers of birds are seen in flocks. There are more visitors around and dust becomes kicked up if you are exploring near the Transpantaniara Highway. Temperatures are quite pleasant (daytime highs in the low 80's and nighttime lows in the 60's). Occasional cold fronts come through with daytime highs in the 50's.

**July** - The only disadvantage to going to the Pantanal in July is that almost everyone else does. Hotels are full. However, the crowds don't seem to bother the wildlife. Skies are clear and the temperatures are pleasant. There is also a definite drop in the mosquito population. Daytime highs in the upper 70's to low 80's with nights in the 60's.

**August** - There are still some fishermen and other travelers in the region in August. The bird migration starts to wind down as the ponds dry up and birds are drawn to other homes. In compensation, capybara and caiman populations are easily seen. Sometimes, you have to wait for wildlife to get off of the roads! There is a haze in the atmosphere from smoke caused by burning in the Amazon and Cerrado, further to the north. Temperatures are pleasant and mosquitoes are almost non-existent.

**September** - Water levels continue to drop and the skies get hazier. There is an exceptional amount of animal activity, and during a good week you may spot up to 200 bird species, 10 mammal species and several reptiles. Temperatures remain pleasant and the region has fewer tourists. Much of the luscious green vegetation has long since turned brown but a number of flowering trees are in full bloom.

**October** - There is a flurry of bird activity. Many are in mating plumage and actively pursuing courtship. Also, many animals are more readily seen around water holes and the few trees producing fruit at this time of year. Temperatures are starting to rise again but evenings are still quite pleasant (daytime highs in the mid 80's, nights in the upper 60's).

**November** - This is predictably the driest month of the year. Skies are often cloudy, offering respite from the ever-warmer sun, but it seldom rains. Very few visitors come this month and a number of shier species might be more readily observed. Vegetation is brown and there are no mosquitoes.

**Travel during the months of December through March** is not recommended due to heavy rain showers, flooding (making for limited access to many sectors of the ranch), and oppressive heat. Although the above descriptions give you an idea of what to expect at the different times of the year, the Pantanal is so incredibly rich that, whenever one goes, more is typically seen than expected. Not only is each month different, each week there are changes as well.

## Brazil: Pantanal Nature Safari

**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 the Pantanal, we recommend making reservations at least 4 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 2012 Terms & Conditions on Southwind's website (click [Book a Trip](#)>2012 Terms & Conditions).

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### Southwind Adventures, Inc

PO Box 621057 Littleton, CO 80162 • Tel: (303) 972-0701 or (800) 377-9463 • Fax: (303) 972-0708  
info@southwindadventures.com • [www.southwindadventures.com](http://www.southwindadventures.com)