



V E N E Z U E L A

TREKKING IN THE LOST WORLD

DURATION	:	11 days / 10 nights (6 nights tent camping)
SEASON	:	October through May
DEPARTURES	:	Guaranteed with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 12 participants
TRIP RATING	:	Strenuous Trek, Grade (IV) - This is a challenging program featuring a spectacular, 6-day, porter supported trek, averaging 7.7 miles per day under the tropical sun at elevations between 4,800' and 9,220', plus a long overland drive and a chartered flight in a small plane.
2009 DATES	:	On request any week during the season for a minimum of 4 travelers

INTRODUCTION :

The mysterious, mist-shrouded *tepuis*, or tabletop mountains, that inspired Sir Arthur Conan Doyle at the turn-of-the-century to write about the *Lost World*, are some of the oldest and most impressive rock formations on earth. Estimated to be 1.8 billion years old, the near vertical, rose-colored cliffs of these mesas tower several thousand feet above the surrounding plains of the Gran Sabana in southeastern Venezuela. Sparkling waterfalls plunging into the dense ring of tropical forest at the base of these plateaus are a dramatic and inspiring sight. Isolated from each other and the savannah below, the summits of these fascinating mesas, some of which are several hundred square miles in area, are biological wonders. Each has developed its own unique flora and fauna, many species existing nowhere else in the world, causing some to refer to them as *Islands in the Sky*.

Following an overnight stay in Caracas, we catch an early flight to Puerto Ordaz and begin our overland journey. We drive through rolling countryside north of the Guianan Shield until, upon leaving the forest, the *tepu*-dotted plains of the Gran Sabana open up before us. Our drive takes two days, allowing us to visit exotic falls such as Kama Merú and to briefly explore the Canay and Suruape rivers along the way. From the Pemón Indian village of Perai-tepui, we hike through scattered forests and rolling savannah, gradually gaining elevation on the way to Roraima's base. Then, ascending a steep, natural ramp through the mountain's ring of dense epiphyte-draped cloud-forest, we reach the summit. After 2 days to explore the bizarre terrain of arches, caves and labyrinths on top, including the *Valle de los Cristales* and the Triple Point where Brazil, Guyana and Venezuela meet, we retrace our route to Perai-tepui and drive to Santa Elena. The next day, we take a chartered flight to Canaima and fly over Angel Falls before continuing to Puerto Ordaz or Ciudad Bolívar and then Caracas.

Venezuela: Trekking in the Lost World

DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY:

DAY 01: USA/CARACAS

We leave home this morning for Maiquetia, Venezuela's International Airport located on the Caribbean coast in the port of La Guaira. We meet our local representative upon arrival and drive along the coast, approximately 20 minutes, to the comfortable Puerto Viejo Hotel overlooking the sea. Dinner is on your own this evening.

DAY 02: CARACAS/PUERTO ORDAZ/KAMOIRAN

After an early breakfast we fly to **Puerto Ordaz** (300'), an important industrial city and commercial port located at the confluence of the Orinoco and Caroní rivers. Upon arrival we are met by our local guide, load our gear into 4X4 vehicles, and begin our journey towards the Gran Sabana. We initially drive south along a well-maintained paved road, passing through low hills covered with deciduous trees and chaparral vegetation. Our drive passes by the fertile fields and plantations around Upata where rice, cacao, cotton and tobacco are grown. We continue through the rich gold and diamond mining region around Tumeremo and El Dorado where we might stop to buy some nuggets or gemstones. The route has many *Araguanays*, the national tree of Venezuela whose lovely yellow blossoms reach their peak in April and May. From El Dorado we enter into a lush tropical forest where, at the Virgin's Rock, or *Piedra de la Virgen*, the road begins climbing the steep switchbacks of the *escalera*, or ladder, as we ascend the sandstone escarpment that marks the beginning of the Gran Sabana, jutting up from the Guianan Shield. At the top we suddenly leave the forest and see that stretching out before us are impressive open plains, punctuated by the vertical, rose-colored cliffs of the *tepuis*. We continue driving to the basic, but comfortable, Kamoirán Lodge (4,000') where we spend the night. **Driving distance:** 302 miles or 7 hours.

(B,L,D)

DAY 03: KAMOIRAN/PERAI-TEPUI CAMP

Following a leisurely breakfast at the lodge we continue driving southeast through the Gran Sabana toward the Pemón Indian village of San Francisco de Yuruani. Along the way, we stop to view *Kama Merú Falls*, which have a beautiful 160-foot drop over the edge of the mesa. We board a *curiara*, or open canoe, to explore further and get closer views of the forest and the waterfall. Those who wish may choose to relax and swim on one of the sandy beaches. Nearly the entire region, almost 7.4 million acres including the mountainous areas to the west, has been set aside as **Canaima National Park** to protect the special ecology of this land of *tepuis*, waterfalls, and exotic flora and fauna. It is the sixth largest national park on earth! We continue driving and take a short side trip to see the Arapán Valley and Suruape River, an exotic spot at an elevation of 3,260' with pools, cascades, and palm trees. South of the Yuruani River we turn off the main highway onto a dirt road leading to the Taurepan Indian community of **Perai-tepui**, where our first camp is established. The main Pemón tribes are the Arekunas, Taurepanes, and Kamarakotos. This village has the park's only guard station, and is home to the local porters who will assist our group by carrying food and gear. **Driving distance:** 80 miles or 3 hours; **Camp elevation:** 4,480'.

(B,L,D)

DAY 04: KUKENAN RIVER CAMP

This morning we enjoy our first sunrise views of Roraima before breakfast. As we watch the sun light up its cliffs we contemplate its Indian name, *Great, Ever-fruitful, Mother of Streams*, which seems appropriate because the waters from its summit feed into three important river systems, the Amazon, Orinoco, and Essequibo. After packing our gear into daypacks, we begin trekking,

Venezuela: Trekking in the Lost World

followed by our porters who prefer to use their own backpack-like woven baskets to carry their loads. Our route starts off descending from the ridge into a small forested valley, across a stream, then uphill toward a broad plateau. Following a clear trail, we hike across rolling terrain and open, grassy savannah, sometimes passing through gallery forests along small streams. We might hear the occasional "boink" (a sound like a hammer striking an anvil) of the bearded bellbird as we leave the valley. Directly ahead of us is the massive, symmetrical bulk of Mount Roraima, whose 9,220-foot summit towers above the plains. To the north of this mesa is a sister *tepui*, Kukenán, off of whose 8,790-foot summit cascades the third highest waterfall in the world with a 2,000-foot drop. Further north, three other *tepuis* are distinguishable in the distance. With help from our porters, we wade across the **Kukenán River** to our campsite. After dinner, we anticipate the night sky for a view of the Southern Cross, and myriad other stars and constellations. **Trek length:** 7.5 miles or 6 hours hiking; **Camp elevation:** 3,700'. (B,L,D)

DAY 05: RORAIMA BASE CAMP

This morning we follow a long inclined slope that leads gradually uphill to the base of Roraima's vertical, 2,000-foot cliffs. The terrain is a series of ridges radiating out from the main mountain, covered by grasslands. Deep ravines harbor patches of rainforest that have escaped the local Indians' fires. We might spot *Tropidurus* lizards scurrying across the trail, watch chestnut-collared sparrows hopping in the shrubs, or observe yellow-headed vultures circling overhead. Our **basecamp** is located at the foot of Roraima's spectacular walls. Breathtaking views of the savannah roll away into the distance, splendid rose-colored cliffs rise straight up above us toward the mountain's summit. Late day light allows for spectacular photos as mist and sunlight cross in front of the mountain until the sun sets. **Trek length:** 5 miles or 5 hours hiking; **Camp elevation:** 6,160'. (B,L,D)

DAY 06: RORAIMA SUMMIT CAMP

Our ascent today follows a 50-foot wide natural ledge, running from right to left along the cliff face, allowing the only nontechnical access to the summit of **Roraima**. This route, discovered by the British explorer Everard Thurn in 1884, passes through steep, jungle-like terrain that requires good stamina but no climbing skills. Just beyond our camp, we cross a stream and enter an exquisite cloud-forest where dense vegetation prevents us from seeing the cliffs ahead or the savannah dropping away behind. Our concentration is focused on the trail and the diverse plants around us. Bromeliads, bladderworts, sundews, tree ferns, mosses and heliconias are everywhere. Continuing through the cloud-forest, the trail is wide enough to be safe, but is steep and can be very slippery. Orchids, ferns, palms, woody shrubs, and lovely flowers abound. There are three sections of small ravines where we must scramble down and up again. The last has a thin, ribbon-like waterfall plunging from the crest, splashing the trail with droplets (it really flows when it is raining on the summit). Near the top our route gets steeper and rockier. It then turns inward through a natural cleft in the rock and suddenly we're on the summit gazing at the strange, fascinating landscape. From the edge of the plateau we continue crossing alternating patches of dry, black rock and wet, peat bogs until we arrive to our camp in the early afternoon. Our tents are pitched in natural caves, an added measure of protection from the frequent mists and showers on top. Following lunch, we explore the *tepui's* mysterious and often foggy summit, hiking about 3.5 miles (round-trip) to search for quartz crystals in the *Valle de los Cristales*. At a lookout point, we observe the impressive cliffs of Kukenán & Roraima, as well as the views out toward Guyana. **Total trek length:** 7.5 miles or 7.5 hours hiking; **Camp elevation:** 8,950'. (B,L,D)

Venezuela: Trekking in the Lost World

DAY 07: RORAIMA SUMMIT CAMP

We have the full day to explore the fantasy-looking top of **Roraima**, whose massive summit is approximately 109 square miles! The eroding forces of constant wind and rain have created stunning formations: giant stone sculptures; house-sized slabs balanced precariously on slender spires; the arches and pillars of a forgotten, imaginary dynasty; and natural bridges that span narrow chasms. The dominant color is black, created by the rock-encrusting lichen that covers every surface. Accompanied by our guide and a couple of the porters, the strongest walkers may follow a rough trail through this bizarre landscape, hiking up and down, crossing creeks and boggy terrain, passing through natural labyrinths, and weaving among boulders, to the concrete monument marking the "triple-point", where the countries of Venezuela, Brazil, and Guyana meet. This is the perfect place to stop for lunch. On the return to camp, we observe several interesting species of plants - the *Stegolepis guianensis*, *Orectanthe sceptrum*, *Drosera roraimae* (a type of sundew) and *Heliamphora nutans* (a native sun pitcher) plus lots of ferns, mosses, orchids, and bromeliads. Roughly half of the flora identified in the "Lost World" exists on Roraima, and nowhere else on earth. We might also see the tiny pebble toad who rolls downhill to escape from danger. We reach our camp in the late afternoon tired from the long hike, but exhilarated by our amazing discoveries exploring the *Mother of Streams*. A hot dinner is a welcome delight this evening!

Hiking distance: 10 miles or 7 hours.

(B,L,D)

DAY 08: RIOTEK CAMP

Following our last photo opportunities on the summit, we begin our descent carefully down through the cloud-forest. If the weather permits, the views out across the savannah and back toward Roraima's sheer walls are astounding. Upon reaching our former basecamp area we stop for lunch, and perhaps a refreshing dip in the stream below the campsite. Then we continue along the more gradual descent to the Kukenán River where we cross and hike the last mile to our campsite at **Riotek**. **Trek length:** 9.5 miles or 6 hours hiking; **Camp elevation:** 3,800'. (B,L,D)

DAY 09: PERAI-TEPUI/SANTA ELENA

Today we leave camp early in order to avoid the strong sunlight and heat of midday as we continue the trek back to our staff's village, **Perai-tepui**. We take final, lingering looks toward Roraima's summit, remembering the bizarre rock formations and unique flora and fauna. These are our last glimpses of the *Lost World* before the mist and clouds envelope the top and hide it from our view. Our route is slightly uphill to Perai-tepui, so we really appreciate the picnic lunch and cool drinks awaiting us. With time permitting, we visit the village schoolhouse and talk with the teacher, or perhaps one of our Taurepan friends will invite us to his home to meet his family. We say goodbye to our friendly camp staff, and after loading our gear into the vehicles we're bound for Santa Elena de Uairén, stopping along the way at the spectacular Quebrada Jaspe. This small town is south, near the Brazil border, and has an airstrip with regular flights. Also, it is a commercial and handicraft center, with opportunities to shop for some of the intricately woven baskets, backpacks, fishing bows and arrows, woodskins and other handcrafted items made in the area. We spend the night outside town in the simple, but comfortable, family-style lodge at Yakoo Ecological Camp and enjoy a delicious and plentiful dinner together. **Trek length:** 6.5 miles or 4.5 hours hiking; **Driving distance:** 60 miles or 2 hours; **Final elevation:** 3,060'. (B,L,D)

DAY 10: CANAIMA/ANGEL FALLS/CARACAS

We transfer to the airport this morning and board our chartered flight for the one-hour journey to Canaima. Flying over the Gran Sabana gives us an entirely different perspective on this dramatic region. Weather permitting, we intend to fly over **Auyán-tepui** the massive flat-topped mesa from

Venezuela: Trekking in the Lost World

which cascades **Angel Falls**, the world's highest waterfall. A thrilling flight up narrow Devil's Canyon gives us extraordinary shots of this breathtaking sight, whose 3,281' drop is sixteen times higher than that of Niagara. According to Pemón Indian legends, Canaima, a lovely lagoon surrounded by cascades such as the Hacha and Ucaima waterfalls, is the dwelling place of the god Kanaimo. During the first decades of the 20th century, Canaima was visited by those searching for gold and diamonds, including Jimmy Angel, discoverer of Angel Falls. Established in the 1950's as a gateway to the park, the area's comfortable cabins, lovely pink tinged beach and exotic tropical setting make it the ideal spot to take a break from our long journey back. From the airport we take a safari-style vehicle for the short ride to the port, then board a motor canoe to cross the Carrao River for a hike to El Sapo, or Frog, Falls. Pack your shorts and sandals because we'll get wet exploring behind the waterfall! Back at Canaima we have lunch at a lodge beside the lagoon. Afterwards we have time to shop for Pemón handicrafts. Leaving the area later in the afternoon, we fly back to **Puerto Ordaz** (or to Ciudad Bolívar according to flight schedules) where we catch the connecting flight to **Caracas**. Located at 3,150' in a temperate valley, Caracas' modern architecture has a dramatic backdrop of Mount Avila and Pico Naiguata. At 9,071' the latter is the highest peak in the coastal range. Met upon arrival at the airport by local staff, we drive to the nearby Puerto Viejo Hotel on the coast. A congenial farewell dinner at a typical restaurant is included this evening. (B,L,D)

DAY 11: CARACAS/USA

We transfer to the airport this morning and are assisted with check-in for our international flight back to the **USA**. (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, weather, and road/river/trail conditions as well as flight schedule changes. Distances and altitudes are approximate and times indicated are NET hiking times not including lunch break, rest stops, time to explore or take pictures, etc. On **Day 02**, depending on flight schedules we may drive only as far as, and overnight at, the Anaconda Lodge, located about 1.5 hours before Kamoiran. This program is suitable for physically fit participants accustomed to outdoor activities, minimum twelve years old.

2009 LAND COST:	\$4,185 p.p.d. (4-5 participants)
	\$3,875 p.p.d. (6-9 participants)
	\$3,665 p.p.d. (10-12 participants)
	\$ 455 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.
- Chartered Santa Elena/Canaima/Angel Falls/Puerto Ordaz flight (5 seat Cessna 206 or similar aircraft).
- Local and return flight reconfirmation, **in-country airport check-in and luggage assistance**.
- All **accommodations in standard-class (4 star) hotels** or lodges as listed (or at similar hotels, and basic lodges in the Gran Sabana) on a shared basis with private bath. Double beds for

Venezuela: Trekking in the Lost World

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. Single tents cannot be guaranteed on trek but will be provided whenever possible upon request. Due to the limited number of rooms at the lodges in the Gran Sabana, a maximum of 2 singles are 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).
- Local, **English-speaking, guide/escort** (Days 01-10) plus any applicable entrance fees.
- Standard trekking service including: Experienced guide/cook, camp assistant, and local, Pemón porters to carry personal gear (**up to 20 pounds per participant**) as well as communal equipment and food. Basic group camping equipment: two-person tents, Thermarest™ sleeping pads, dining screen tent, collapsible dining stools, cooking and eating utensils. All meals: Hot breakfast, packed or picnic lunch, and served dinner.

First-aid kit.

NOT INCLUDED:

- US domestic, International flights, nor local flights within Venezuela (except the charter flight to Canaima and Angel Falls).
- Local Venezuelan airport departure taxes (approx. \$100 per person).
- One (1) meal at about \$15-20.
- Tours or other services not listed on the itinerary.
- Alcoholic beverages.
- Tips to the local staff.
- Sleeping bag, other personal gear, or items of a personal nature such as clothing, 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.

We strongly recommend all travelers take out some form of **Travel Insurance** —plan information and an application are sent upon receipt of your deposit (sooner if requested). Policies with **Travel Insured International** can be purchased online through our website at www.southwindadventures.com/insurance.html. **If you or a family member has a pre-existing medical condition**, you need to purchase this policy within 14 days of booking your trip to qualify for reimbursement of non-refundable trip costs in the event that a recurrence of the pre-existing condition forces you to cancel your trip (some restrictions apply). For more information or to purchase Southwind's recommended travel insurance plan, please visit our website.

LATE DEPARTURE FROM CARACAS: Participants with an extra day of vacation time are **strongly encouraged** to consider leaving Caracas back to the U.S. on Day 12 (Sun) of this itinerary. This provides an additional day, in case bad weather in the Gran Sabana makes it

Venezuela: Trekking in the Lost World

impossible for the small planes to fly the Santa Elena-Canaima route (a definite advantage when you are traveling in a remote location). Should weather be good, and the planes fly as scheduled, the extra day to explore Caracas allows time to enjoy some of the shopping and sightseeing available in this historic city.

OPTIONAL TRIP EXTENSIONS: We can arrange extra days for those wanting to visit the *Ilanos* for superb wildlife viewing, explore the Andes for scenic beauty, or relax under the sun on the beaches of the Caribbean coast. For more information please call us at **800-377-9463** to request our **2009 Venezuela: Summary of Trip Extensions** (extensions require a minimum of 2 participants), or view them on our website, click on *Trips>Trekking in the Lost World>Extend Your Trip*.

TREKKING 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 birds so much that adventure became his way of life and he and his partner began Akaan 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 wildlife and respect for 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! A certified NOLS 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 a warm, tropical weather pattern year-round. Venezuela's dry season runs from December through May with the rains starting in June and continuing through October/November. Rain can occur anytime, although showers lasting all day are unlikely, especially in the dry season.

Trekking in the Gran Sabana region of Mount Roraima is a tropical experience (hot and humid) with temperatures very dependant upon elevation. Below 3,280' temperatures average between 80-90°F during the day. Higher than this, average temperatures fluctuate between 55-78°F. On the summit of Mount Roraima the nighttime lows can be close to freezing but should not fall below 32°F. Humidity in this area is quite high (70% and above) and the chances of rain showers are also high at any time of the year. Furthermore, mist on top is likely as clouds blow in and around the summit, bringing some of the mystery to the *Lost World*. The driest months are January and February followed by December and March. The hottest months are March, April and May, and September, October and November.

ESTIMATED AIRFARE: The Land Cost for this trip DOES NOT include the flights to/from Caracas or local flights to Puerto Ordaz. The **international** airfare from US gateways (Miami, Dallas, Houston, Atlanta, New York) to Caracas is about \$700-\$900 round-trip. American, Continental, Delta and Taca Airlines offer service. The **local flights** within Venezuela are estimated at \$200-300 per person for Caracas-Puerto Ordaz-Caracas. 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 within 45 days of your departure to arrange your

Venezuela: Trekking in the Lost World

transfers. We recommended that you **DO NOT** purchase any airline tickets until your trip is guaranteed to operate. Southwind sends out a trip confirmation letter once a trip is guaranteed or you may 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 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. Rush Service: A rush fee of \$200 per person will be applied to your invoice for reservations placed 45 to 21 days before departure.

Cancellation Fees and other policies are outlined under the 2009 Terms & Conditions on Southwind's website (click Book a Trip>2009 Terms & Conditions).

09-Ven Version:Feb09