



**HEART OF BRAZIL: CERRADO, AMAZON AND
PANTANAL**

28 AUGUST - 11 SEPTEMBER 2018



Hyacinth Macaw (photo Charlie Sax) is one of our targets on this trip.

Welcome to the first of our 2017 Birding Tour Brazil itineraries! In a country well known for its staggering biodiversity, the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso sets itself apart. Lying in the heart of South America, it encompasses three major biomes that together make this one of the most biologically rich regions in all of Brazil: the Cerrado, the Amazon Rainforest, and the Pantanal.

From Cuiabá we embark on our journey to the Cerrado, the first of the major biomes of Mato Grosso and the second-largest in Brazil by area, after the Amazon. This highly threatened mosaic of dry woodland, gallery forest, and grassland is home to its own unique subset of specialized birds, including **White-eared Puffbird**, **Collared Crescentchest**, and **White-rumped Tanager**. We explore this fascinating biome via the scenic Chapada dos Guimarães National Park, a landscape studded with beautiful rock formations and adorned with cascading waterfalls.

Next, we also include the Amazon Rainforest on this exciting trip, a vast forest deserving of many superlatives. With its astonishing list of nearly 600 bird species, there are few better places to explore this incredible eco-region than the vast reserve centered on Cristalino Lodge. Here an extensive network of forest trails provides opportunities to see over 40 species of antbird, 18 species of woodcreeper, foliage-gleaners, forest-falcons, and manakins. The forest's most colorful denizens can be seen from the lodge's two canopy towers, including **Spangled** and **Pompadour Cotingas**, **Scarlet** and **Blue-and-yellow Macaws**, **Paradise** and **Opal-rumped Tanagers**, and maybe even a **Harpy Eagle**. Numerous hard-to-find or highly localized species are easier to find here than anywhere else: **White-browed Hawk**, **Tapajos Hermit**, **Black-girdled Barbet**, **Crimson-bellied Parakeet**, **Kawall's Amazon**, **Glossy Antshrike**, **Bare-eyed Antbird**, **Cryptic Forest Falcon**, **Tooth-billed Wren**, and many more to look out for at one of the best birding sites in the world.

Finally we embark on our journey to the Pantanal, a vast, seasonally flooded wetland renowned for its incredible concentrations of birds at the end of the dry season. We schedule this tour during this time, when the fish trapped in the shrinking pools of water attract hordes of herons, egrets, storks, and other wetland species. The star of such huge concentrations is the massive **Jabiru**, towering over a diverse collection of South American waterbirds, such as **Sunbittern**, **Plumbeous Ibis**, and **Southern Screamer**. Raptors such as **Savanna Hawk**, **Snail Kite**, and **Black-collared Hawk** and up to five species of kingfisher also join the bonanza in one of the world's great birding spectacles. The Pantanal also hosts a mosaic of forest islands and riverside forest, which is home to an interesting assemblage of regional endemics, such as **Mato Grosso Antbird**, **White-lored Spinetail**, and **Pale-crested Woodpecker**. And, of course, there is no better place in the world to see the enormous **Hyacinth Macaw**, the largest species of parrot in the Americas and one of Brazil's great conservation success stories, or the elusive jaguar, the third-largest species of feline in the world.

Please be aware that on this tour 1.5 days will be spent searching for the magnificent jaguar.

This tour starts early in the morning on Day 1; therefore clients need to arrive in Cuiabá the day before.

For those wishing to continue exploring this magnificent country, this tour can be combined with our [Brazil: Cerrado Endemics and Brazilian Merganser](#) tour, followed by [Comprehensive Southeast Brazil Part I](#) and [Comprehensive Southeast Brazil Part II](#).

Please note that the detailed itinerary below cannot be guaranteed as it is only a rough guide and can be changed (usually slightly) due to factors such as availability of accommodation, updated information on the state of accommodation, roads, or birding sites, the discretion of the guides and other factors.

Itinerary (15 days/14 nights)

Days 1 – 3. Chapada dos Guimarães

We will transfer from Cuiabá to Chapada dos Guimarães National Park. Here we will be sure to stop at the stunning and highly photogenic Veu de Noiva (Bridal Veil) Falls to watch **Red-and-green Macaws** come in to roost one evening (probably the first evening). Then we spend each morning exploring the various habitats present in the national park. Cerrado, a shrub-dominated landscape dotted with gnarled trees and tall grasses, harbors a wide variety of charismatic and often endemic species. At dawn, the plaintive calls of **Red-legged Seriema** and the rollicking duets of **White-rumped Tanager** add ambiance to this otherworldly yet beautiful habitat that is nearly endemic to Brazil. Feeding flocks and flowering trees right by the road often contain specialties such as the cute **Checkered Woodpecker** and the smart **Coal-crested Finch**. As the day heats up, we retreat into the shade of gallery forest, where we have opportunities to see **Southern Antpiper** and **Saffron-billed Sparrow**.

Overnight: Pousada do Parque, Chapada dos Guimarães

Day 4. Chapada dos Guimarães to Cristalino Lodge

After some more early-morning birding and a sumptuous breakfast we bid farewell to Chapada dos Guimarães to catch our midday flight to Alta Floresta. From here we continue by van along a dirt track to the Teles Pires River, stopping at a palm swamp along the way to seek out **Point-tailed Palmcreeper** and **Sulphury Flycatcher**. Once we reach the river we board a motorized canoe and slowly work our way up a tributary of the Teles Pires, the Cristalino River. Flanked by beautiful primary forest, this section of the Cristalino River serves as an excellent introduction to the southern Amazon. **White-winged** and **White-banded Swallows** skim the surface of the water right by our boat, lowland tapir often lounges lazily along the riverbank, and **Scarlet** and **Blue-and-yellow Macaws** may make a synchronized flyby overhead before we reach the lodge.

Overnight: Cristalino Lodge

Days 5 – 8. Cristalino Lodge

Although birding will be significantly more challenging at Cristalino Lodge than elsewhere on the tour, the rewards will be far greater. We shall take full advantage of our four full days of birding here to explore trails that sample all the various habitats at the reserve, including: Varzea and Igapo Forest: Seasonally flooded forests that harbor various difficult and rare species, such as **Flame-crested Manakin**, **Bronzy Jacamar**, and **Long-billed Woodcreeper**. The lower height of the forest canopy provides easier viewing of feeding flocks, as well as our best chance to see the recently described **Cryptic Forest Falcon**.

Nearby, river islands in the middle of the Teles Pires River provide our best chances at seeing

Restinga Tyrannulet, Glossy Antshrike, Amazonian Umbrellabird, Ladder-tailed Nightjar on its day roost, and many more.

Terra Firme Forest: A staggering diversity of birds inhabits the understory. Although they are often not easy to see, we will spend plenty of time walking the trails in search of a nearly endless list of potential species: woodcreepers such as **Red-billed Woodcreeper** and Tapajos **Scythebill** (a newly described species not yet recognized by all authorities), antbirds such as **Bare-eyed Antbird** and **Black-spotted Bare-eye**, jacamars such as **Paradise Jacamar** and **Blue-necked Jacamar**, foliage-gleaners such as **Para Foliage-gleaner** and **Chestnut-winged Hookbill**, etc. Patches of bamboo contain localized specialties such as **Rose-breasted Chat**, **Manu Antbird**, and **Rufous-capped Nunlet**. The two canopy towers at Cristalino will give us a chance at seeing a host of colorful species that are often hard to see elsewhere: **Pompadour Cotinga**, **Red-fan Parrot**, and **Gould's Toucanet** are just a few of the tantalizing possibilities.

Serra: The reserve at Cristalino includes several weathered, geologically old, rocky outcrops that rise above the forest. These rocky knolls function as islands of deciduous dry forest. Thus they also contain their own unique subset of birds, including **Natterer's Slaty Antshrike**, **Spotted Puffbird**, and **White-fringed Antwren**. When the trees here are in bloom they attract a variety of rare hummingbirds, including **Fiery-tailed Aowlbill** and **Tapajos Hermit**.

Finally, we will spend time cruising the beautiful Cristalino River in the afternoon and into the evening in search of both birds (**Razor-billed Curassow** and **Green-and-rufous Kingfisher**) and mammals (lowland tapir, giant otter, and paca).

As you can see, there will be plenty to observe and experience during our time at Cristalino Lodge!

Overnight: Cristalino Lodge

Day 9. Pousada Piuval

We fly back to Cuiabá and then transfer to Pousada Piuval, a working cattle ranch just two hours away from Cuiabá. The mosaic of wetlands, flooded pastures, and gallery forest at this lodge should provide excellent opportunities to see a huge variety of species more common in the drier northern portion of the Pantanal, including **Greater Rhea**, **Red-legged Seriema**, and **Long-tailed Ground Dove**. While birding in islands of gallery forest and scrub, we will target **White-fronted Woodpecker** and **Great Rufous Woodcreeper**, as well as having opportunities to see a host of more widespread specialties, such as **Red-billed Scythebill**, **Planalto Slaty Antshrike**, and **Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrant**.

Overnight: Pousada Piuval

Day 10. Pousada Piuval to Pouso Alegre Lodge

After an extra morning of birding at Pousada Piuval we will continue our trip, exploring the great habitat on the way to Pouso Alegre Lodge, looking for species such as **Red-billed Scythebill**, **Whistling Heron**, **Nanday Parakeet**, **Great Rufous Woodcreeper**, **Planalto Slaty Antshrike**, and our first **Hyacinth Macaw**. The habitat here offers great chances for mammals like giant anteater, tapir, and even ocelot. During our time in the Pantanal we will make a few nocturnal drives in search of these elusive mammals.

Overnight: Pouso Alegre Lodge

Days 11 – 12. Hotel Pantanal Mato Grosso

Today our journey will take us to the vicinity of the Pixaim River. We should arrive at our lodge around lunch, after which we will take an afternoon boat trip that offers a chance at seeing oddballs like **Sungrebe** and **Boat-billed Heron**, and maybe even giant otter. In the

evening we will try for the seldom-seen **Zigzag Heron**, while **Band-tailed Nighthawks** feed over the river. Later a spotlighting session along the highway right by the lodge can be productive for **Nightjars (Little, Spot-tailed, and Scissor-tailed)**, and large mammals.

The gallery forest trails behind our lodge can be alive with birds in the early morning. By exploring these trails during this time we hope to come across regional specialties such as **Mato Grosso Antbird**, **Pale-crested Woodpecker**, and **Stripe-necked Tody-Tyrant**. More open areas around the lodge contain **Red-crested Cardinal**, **Rufous Cacholote**, **Purplish Jay**, and many more. In the afternoon we have the option to continue birding along the Transpantaneira Highway, including a stop at a nearby site for **Nanday Parakeet**.

Overnight: Hotel Pantanal Mato Grosso

Day 13. Pantanal Mato Grosso to Porto Jofre

We set out early this morning from Hotel Pantanal Mato Grosso to Porto Jofre at the southern terminus of the Transpantaneira Highway, one of the world's great birding roads. Constructed in the 1970s, the Transpantaneira is less of a highway and more of a dirt track, crossing no less than 122 wooden bridges in various states of repair. However, an abundance of wetland birds feed right by the road across its length. It will be hard not to stop to enjoy our first elegant **Maguari Stork**, the bizarre **Southern Screamer**, and the striking **Scarlet-headed Blackbird**. Once we arrive at Porto Jofre we spend the afternoon searching the riverbank for jaguar.

Overnight: Hotel Porto Jofre

Day 14. Porto Jofre

We cruise the river by boat throughout the day in search of jaguar, our main target on this portion of the tour. All the boatmen in this area are in constant radio contact, maximizing our chances at seeing this largest of American cats. Bird species seen along the river can include **Pied Plover**, **Large-billed Tern**, and **Black Skimmer** loitering on the sandy riverbanks.

Overnight: Hotel Porto Jofre

Day 15. Back to Cuiabá

Today we transfer back to Cuiabá along the entire length of the exciting Transpantaneira Highway. We will be birding along the way and will sadly bid farewell to the wonderful Pantanal and its plethora of exciting birds. In the evening we will arrive back in Cuiabá, where the tour ends.

Duration: 15 days
Limit: 2 – 8
Date: 28 August – 11 September 2018
Start: Cuiabá
End: Cuiabá

Price: US\$8652 per person sharing
Single supplement: US\$1035

Price includes:
 Meals
 Accommodation

Guiding fees

Entrance fees

Domestic flights Cuiabá – Alta Floresta and back

All transport while on tour

Tolls

Price excludes:

Flights to and from Cuiabá

Items of a personal nature, e.g. gifts

Alcoholic drinks

Personal insurance

Gratuities