



**THE BEST OF BRAZIL – PANTANAL, CERRADO AND
ATLANTIC FOREST JEWELS**

21 SEPTEMBER – 07 OCTOBER 2023



Jaguar is one of the many mammal highlights of this fantastic tour (photo Riccardo Boschetti).

This tour will surely rank as one of your neotropical wildlife trips of a lifetime! Our Best of Brazil itinerary will allow you to explore three highly fascinating ecosystems of this huge and highly diverse country: the Pantanal, the Cerrado and the Atlantic Forest. It is important to note that while we are in the Pantanal, we will spend a full morning and afternoon on a boat safari along the Cuiabá River concentrating on finding the world's third-largest feline, the elusive and charismatic **Jaguar!**

We will embark on our birding and mammal adventure by exploring 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 season, when the fish trapped in the shrinking pools of water attract hordes of herons, egrets, storks, and other wetland species. The star of these huge concentrations is the massive **Jabiru**, towering over a diverse collection of shorter South American waterbirds, such as **Sunbittern, Plumbeous, Bare-faced, Green, and Buff-necked Ibises, Grey-cowled Wood Rail** and **Southern Screamer**. There is normally a large diversity of raptors around too, with **Savanna Hawk, Snail Kite, Black-collared Hawk** and **Crane Hawk** regularly encountered. Our river trips provide the opportunity to look for species such as **Capped Heron, Sungrebe**, the striking **Agami Heron, Anhinga** and a plethora of **kingfishers** including **Green, Amazon, Ringed, American Pygmy** and **Green-and-rufous**. Other target species include **Band-tailed Antbird** and, with some luck, the seldom-seen **Zigzag Heron**. Boat trips along rivers also provide the best chances of seeing Endangered (IUCN) **Giant (River) Otters**; the largest otter in the world and one of the 'Big Five' of South American mammals. This is the best place on the planet for seeing **Jaguar** and during the dry season sightings are almost guaranteed. This humongous cat is probably the star of the entire show on this tour.



Hyacinth Macaws are often a crowd-favorite in the Pantanal (photo Anne Koke).

The Pantanal is simply paradise for parrot-lovers, with standout species including the iconic and threatened **Hyacinth Macaw**, the largest flying species of parrot in the world and one of Brazil's great conservation success stories. Other parrot species likely to be seen in the Pantanal include the likes of **Golden-collared Macaw**, **Blue-crowned Parakeet**, **Peach-fronted Parakeet**, **White-eyed Parakeet**, **Nanday Parakeet**, **Yellow-chevroned Parakeet**, **Orange-winged Amazon**, **Turquoise-fronted Amazon** and **Scaly-headed Parrot**.

The Pantanal is not only rich in water-associated avifauna; we will also bird its large grasslands, gallery river forests, marshes and plains for species such as **Chotoy Spinetail**, **Scarlet-headed Blackbird**, **White-lored Spinetail**, **Rusty-backed Spinetail**, **Greater Thornbird**, **Masked Gnatcatcher**, **Flavescent Warbler**, the incredible **Helmeted Manakin**, **White Woodpecker**, **Pale-crested Woodpecker** and **Mato Grosso Antbird**.

The Pantanal is perhaps South America's greatest wildlife refuge and here we should get daily sightings of **Capybara** (the largest rodent in the world), primates such as **Black-tailed Marmoset**, **Bearded Capuchin** (sometimes treated as a full species here, 'Azara's Capuchin') and **Black-and-gold Howler Monkeys**. With luck, we might encounter **Marsh Deer**, **Crab-eating Raccoon**, **South American Coati**, **Yellow Armadillo**, **Lowland (Brazilian) Tapir** and **Giant Anteater**.



Pousada Piuval offers some of the best chances for Giant Anteater in the Pantanal (Riccardo Boschetti).

Then we will move to explore the cerrado, a highly threatened mosaic of dry woodland, gallery forest, and grassland, home to its own unique set of special birds, including **White-eared Puffbird**, **Collared Crescentchest**, **Chapada Flycatcher**, **Crested Black Tyrant**, **Coal-crested Finch**, **Blue-and-yellow Macaw**, **Red-shouldered Macaw** 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.

The gallery forest in Chapada dos Guimarães can provide species such as **Brown Jacamar**, **Saffron-billed Sparrow**, **Whooping Motmot**, **Pheasant Cuckoo** and the secretive **Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper**. The grasslands of Chapada dos Guimarães might provide the restricted **Yellow-faced Parrot** and, with a lot of luck, the secretive **Maned Wolf**.



Red-necked Tanager, one of the many brightly colored tanager species we should see on this tour (photo Riccardo Boschetti).

Finally, we will fly to São Paulo to explore the Atlantic Forest in south-eastern Brazil. Here, in this important endemic-rich and highly diverse ecosystem, we will spend time at two of its classic birding sites, Ubatuba, and Itatiaia. During our five days here we will enjoy a large diversity of endemic and beautiful birds such as **Saffron Toucanet**, **Green-billed Toucan**, **Black-and-gold Cotinga**, **Surucua Trogon**, **Pin-tailed Manakin**, **Black Jacobin**, **Saw-billed Hermit**, **Friiled Coquette**, **Green-crowned Plovercrest**, **Blond-crested Woodpecker**, **Bare-throated Bellbird**, **Green-headed Tanager**, **Brazilian Tanager**, **Red-necked Tanager**, **Diademed Tanager**, **Large-tailed Antshrike**, **Black-cheeked Gnateater**, **Slaty Bristlefront**, **Swallow-tailed Cotinga**, **Blue-winged Macaw**, **Slaty-breasted Wood Rail** and **Tawny-browed Owl**.

This tour can be combined with various other of our Brazil birding tours which run one-after-the-other following this trip, including **Southeast Brazil: Itatiaia, Ubatuba and Intervalles** (if you want to see a lot more of the Atlantic Forest birds as the current tour only gives a taster), **Birding Tour Brazil: Serra da Canastra and Cipó endemics, Brazilian Merganser and Maned Wolf** and **Northeast Brazil: Araripe Manakin, Lear's Macaw and other endemics**. You can also

combine this tour with our Brazil birdwatching trips to the Brazilian Amazon (we've replaced Cristalino Lodge with an equivalent), Iguazu Falls (not only one of the most famous scenic wonders of the world, but also a fabulous birding site) and various other parts of this vast country.

Itinerary (17 days/16 nights)

Day 1. Arrival in Cuiabá and transfer to the hotel

After your arrival at Cuiabá, you will be met by our staff and transferred to your comfortable hotel which must rank as the premier hotel in Cuiabá.

Overnight: Hotel Deville, Cuiabá



*The massive **Jabiru** can be seen on exposed sandbanks throughout the Pantanal.*

Day 2. Birding the Pantanal and transfer to Pousada Piuval

We will leave Cuiabá and drive towards Poconé and the Pantanal. During our drive, we will likely see species such as **Blue-and-yellow Macaw**, **Golden-collared Macaw**, **Yellow-chevroned Parakeet**, **Southern Lapwing**, **Cattle Tyrant**, **Plumbeous Ibis**, **Buff-necked Ibis**, **Bare-faced Ibis**, **Red-legged Seriema**, **Rufous Hornero**, **Wood Stork**, **Jabiru**, and **Toco Toucan**. We will arrive at the Pousada Piuval Lodge, and with luck see our first pairs of **Hyacinth Macaws** flying over the Pantanal. Other birds here include **White-eyed Parakeet**, **Sunbittern**, **Southern Screamer**, **Grey Monjita**, **Yellowish Pipit**, **Campo Flicker**, **Sayaca Tanager**, **Chalk-browed Mockingbird** and **Greater Rhea**.

We will also encounter a large number of water-associated species such as **Cocoi Heron**, **Snowy Egret**, **Great Egret**, **Roseate Spoonbill**, **Wood Stork**, **Large-billed Tern**, **Black-necked Stilt**, and **Limpkin**. We will try for the difficult-to-see **Yellow-breasted Crake** and keep an eye out for **Red-legged Seriema** and **Greater Rhea**.

After dinner we will have an optional night drive, looking for animals that might include **Crab-eating Fox** and, with luck, **Lowland (Brazilian) Tapir** and perhaps even the elusive **Giant Anteater**, which is one of the toughest animals to see in the Pantanal.

Overnight: Pousada Piuval Lodge (in superior rooms, when available)



*Another huge and brightly colored macaw, this time **Blue-and-yellow Macaw** (photo Riccardo Boschetti).*

Day 3. Pousada Piuval and transfer to Mato Grosso Hotel

An early morning of birding around Pousada Piuval should hopefully allow us to see **Pale-crested Woodpecker**, **White-fronted Woodpecker**, **Great Thornbird**, **Ferruginous Pygmy Owl** and more **Hyacinth Macaws**. We will then leave the lodge and drive along the fabulous Transpantaneira Road to reach our next port of call, Pantanal Mato Grosso Hotel. En route, we will stop to look for **Blue-crowned** and **Nanday Parakeets**. We should arrive at our hotel at around lunchtime. After a midday break, we will embark on an exciting boat trip along the Pixaim oxbow lake. Here we have chances of seeing the remarkably beautiful **Agami Heron**, **Black-collared Hawk**, all five locally occurring **kingfishers** (**Ringed**, **Amazon**, **Green**, **American Pygmy** and **Green-and-rufous**), **Sungrebe**, **Anhinga**, **Jabiru**, **Blue-throated Piping Guan**, and if we are lucky, the secretive **Zigzag Heron**; we will make a special effort to find this most-wanted species. We might also find our first **Giant (River) Otter**, and there is already a small chance for **Jaguar**, which has been seen on previous Birding Ecotours trips in this area. The main Jaguar

venue is still upcoming though! **Lowland (Brazilian) Tapir** and **Crab-eating Fox** can often be seen at night around the lodge

Overnight: Pantanal Mato Grosso Hotel



The attractive Agami Heron.

Day 4. Hotel Mato Grosso

Today we will start our day birding the fields and gallery forest around the hotel. We will look for many birds such as **Chotoy Spinetail**, **Greater Thornbird**, **Rufous-fronted Thornbird**, **Blue-black Grassquit**, **Unicolored Blackbird**, **White-headed Marsh-Tyrant**, **Rusty-collared Seedeater**, **Picui Ground Dove**, **Scaled Dove**, **Picazuro Pigeon**, **Blue-throated Piping Guan**, **Savanna Hawk**, **Scaled Dove**, **Long-tailed Ground Dove**, **Rusty-backed Spinetail**, **Mato Grosso Antbird**, **Stripe-necked Tody-Tyrant**, **Buff-throated Woodcreeper**, **Undulated Tinamou**, **Helmeted Manakin**, **Ashy-headed Greenlet**, **Blue-crowned Trogon**, **Amazonian Motmot**, **Ferruginous Pygmy Owl**, **Yellow-billed Cardinal** and **Red-crested Cardinal**.

Later in the evening we will try for **Little Nightjar**, which may be active around our lodge.

Overnight: Pantanal Mato Grosso Hotel

Day 5. Transfer to Porto Jofre and Jaguar boat ride

We will have an early start today, leaving the Pantanal Mato Grosso Hotel and driving along the Transpantaneira towards Porto Jofre, where we hope to see species such as **Scarlet-headed Blackbird**, **White-banded Mockingbird**, **Maguari Stork**, **Southern Screamer**, **Black-bellied Whistling Duck**, **Scaly-headed Parrot** and with some luck, **Golden-collared Macaw**.

We will arrive at Porto Jofre for lunch, and in the afternoon, we will have our first **Jaguar** search along the Cuiabá River, which is one of the most reliable places in the world to see this animal. We will also look for **Giant (River) Otters**, which are often seen along the Cuiabá River. Birds we might encounter include **Collared Plover**, **Pied Plover**, **Black Skimmer** and **Large-billed and Yellow-billed Terns**. On the way back to the lodge, **Band-tailed Nighthawk** may be seen flying above the river before dusk.

Overnight: [Hotel Pantanal Norte](#), Porto Jofre

Day 6. Jaguar search

We will have another excursion along the Cuiabá River this morning to hopefully acquire more **Jaguar** sightings, which sometimes are seen hunting prey such as **Capybara** and **Yacare Caiman**. We also hope to experience further encounters with **Giant (River) Otters**. We will have a full six hours on the river this morning as we hope to spend more time with these impressive cats.

After lunch and some downtime, we will head out for the afternoon's birding excursion in the general area. We will explore the Campos de Jofre and Transpantaneira Road looking for **White Woodpecker**, **Southern Caracara**, the two elusive rallids, **Spotted Rail** and **Grey-breasted Crane** and, with luck, **Least Bittern**.

Overnight: [Hotel Pantanal Norte](#), Porto Jofre



Sunsets in the Pantanal can be stunning (photo Riccardo Boschetti)!

Day 7. Transfer to Pouso Alegre Lodge

We'll leave Porto Jofre and drive back to the first section of the Transpantaneira Road to the Pouso Alegre Lodge. Here we hope to encounter different species such as **Planalto Slaty Antshrike**, **Green-barred Woodcreeper**, **Red-billed Scythebill**, **Great Rufous Woodcreeper**, **Black-bellied Antwren**, **Grey-crested Cachalote**, **Chaco Chachalaca**, **Chestnut-bellied Guan**, and **Bare-faced Curassow**. This lodge is basic and small, but what it lacks in comfort is well compensated for by an incredible tract of woodland right on our doorstep. In this woodland, we have extra chances of finding wildlife including **Lowland (Brazilian) Tapir**, **Crab-eating Fox** and, with luck, **Southern Tamandua** (the small anteater!) or maybe even an **Ocelot**. We will look for **Great Potoo**, **Common Potoo**, **Little Nightjar**, **Spot-tailed Nightjar** and **Parauque** during our night drive around the lodge woodlands.

Overnight: Pouso Alegre Lodge

Day 8. Pouso Alegre and transfer to Chapada dos Guimarães

We will have a final day birding the woodlands of Pouso Alegre, where we will focus on any missing species, before leaving the Pantanal. After a week in this fabulous ecosystem, we will head back to Cuiabá and drive to the Chapada dos Guimarães. We hope to arrive before dusk to check our usual stakeouts for **Blue-winged Macaw** and **Red-and-green Macaw**.

Overnight Chapada dos Guimarães



We should find Rufous-tailed Jacamar in Vale da Benção.

Day 9. Birding the Agua Fria Road and Vale da Benção

We will have a pre-dawn start to explore the arid and dusty Agua Fria Road, which is one of the still-accessible spots outside the park with remnants of cerrado habitat. Here we hope to find species like the most-wanted **Collared Crescentchest** as well as **Rufous-winged Antshrike**, **White-rumped Tanager**, **White-banded Tanager**, **Plumbeous Seedeater**, **White-eared Puffbird**, **Black-faced Tanager** and **Chapada** and **Suiriri Flycatchers**. Once it has warmed up, we visit a forested area called Vale da Benção, where we have good chances to see species like **Amazonian Motmot**, **Saffron-billed Sparrow**, **Yellow-tufted Woodpecker**, **Brown Jacamar**, **Rufous-tailed Jacamar**, **Golden-crowned Warbler**, **Red-shouldered Macaw** and hopefully the seldom-seen **Pheasant Cuckoo** and **Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper**. After a midday rest, we will have a long drive to look for the rare and localized **Yellow-faced Parrot**. We will have dinner in Chapada dos Guimarães town and then drive back to our accommodation.

Overnight: Chapada dos Guimarães



Maroon-bellied Parrot, yet another parrot species we will target on this tour.

Day 10. Birding Chapada dos Guimarães

We will have another early start to explore the Geladeira Road, where we will look for **Spot-backed Puffbird**, **Wedge-tailed Grass Finch**, **Sayaca Tanager**, **Red-legged Honeycreeper**, **Burnished-buff Tanager**, **White-tailed Hawk**, **Barred Antshrike**, **Planalto Slaty Antshrike**, **Greater Rhea**, the charismatic **Burrowing Owl**, **Chopi Blackbird**, **Swallow-tailed Hummingbird**, **Blue Dacnis**, **Small-billed Elaenia** and **Southern Scrub Flycatcher**. After lunch, we will visit our stakeout for the endemic **Crested Black Tyrant** and the distinctive subspecies of **Cliff Flycatcher** that occurs here.

Overnight: Chapada dos Guimarães

Day 11. Chapada do Guimarães to Cuiabá and flight to São Paulo

We shall have a predawn start to take advantage of the early morning bird activity and look for any species we may still be missing in the Chapada do Guimarães. We will then transfer to the Cuiabá airport to connect with our domestic flight to São Paulo (this flight is for your account but we will help you co-ordinate it so everyone in the group is on the same flight, please e-mail us at info@birdingecotours.com before booking flights).

Overnight: Hampton by Hilton Guarulhos Airport, São Paulo

Day 12. Drive to Ubatuba and start of Atlantic Forest Birding

Today we will drive to Ubatuba in the heart of Brazil's endemic-rich Atlantic Forest. We will have an incredible afternoon while looking for multiple species of hummingbirds, such as **Black Jacobin**, **Saw-billed Hermit**, **Festive Coquette**, **Sombre Hummingbird**, **White-chinned Sapphire** and **Versicolored Emerald**. The tanager feeders attract stunning birds such as **Red-necked Tanager**, **Brazilian Tanager**, **Green-headed Tanager**, **Blue Dacnis**, **Chestnut-bellied Euphonia** and **Violaceous Euphonia**.

Overnight: Ubatuba



*We will hopefully see **Blue Manakin** along the trails at Ubatuba (photo Riccardo Boschetti).*

Day 13. Birding Ubatuba

We will spend the morning and afternoon birding the splendid trails at Ubatuba, where we will look for **Blond-crested Woodpecker**, **Bare-throated Bellbird**, **Orange-eyed Thornbird**, **Yellow-throated Woodpecker**, **Crescent-chested Puffbird**, **Scaled Antbird**, **Ferruginous Antbird**, **Salvadori's Antwren**, **Black-cheeked Gnateater**, **Diademed Tanager**, **Sao Paulo**

Tyrannulet, Long-billed Wren, Pin-tailed Manakin, Blue Manakin, Spot-breasted Antvireo and Channel-billed Toucan.

At night we will look for **Tawny-browed Owl, Short-tailed Nighthawk and Common Potoo.**

Overnight Ubatuba

Day 14. Transfer to Itatiaia National Park

After breakfast, we will transfer to Itatiaia National Park. Our lodge is located in the lowlands of the park, where we have chances for the truly stunning **Saffron Toucanet, Red-breasted Toucan, Green-crowned Plovercrest, Gilt-edged Tanager, Brassy-breasted Tanager, Olive-green Tanager, Golden-chevroned Tanager, Rufous-headed Tanager, Frilled Coquette, White-bibbed Antbird, Violet-capped Woodnymph, White-throated Hummingbird, White-eyed Foliage-gleaner, Maroon-bellied Parakeet, Pileated Parrot, Velvety Black Tyrant, and Scaled Woodcreeper.** The **Slaty-breasted Wood Rail** is often seen in the parking area and the nearby flowers attracts the lovely **Frilled Coquette.**

Overnight: Hotel do Ypê, Itatiaia



We hope to find Saffron Toucanet at Itatiaia National Park.

Days 15 - 16. Itatiaia National Park

We will spend two days exploring the exciting Itatiaia National Park looking for birds such as **Itatiaia Spinetail, Araucaria Tit-Spinetail, Pampas Finch, Diademed Tanager, Black-and-gold Cotinga, Large-tailed Antshrike, Rufous-backed Antvireo, Serra do Mar Tyrannulet, Rufous-tailed Antbird, Bay-chested Warbling Finch, Thick-billed Saltator, Swallow-tailed**

Cotinga, Rufous Gnateater, Surucua Trogon, Rufous-capped Motmot, White-barred Piculet, Yellow-fronted Woodpecker, Maroon-bellied Parakeet, Black-billed Scythebill, Rufous-capped Spinetail, Pallid Spinetail, Scaled Woodcreeper, Streaked Xenops, Grey-capped Tyrannulet, Planalto Tyrannulet, Ochre-bellied Flycatcher, Eared Pygmy Tyrant, Blue Manakin, Black-tailed Myiobius, Chestnut-crowned Becard, Chivi Vireo, Rufous-crowned Greenlet, Black-goggled Tanager, and Red-rumped Cacique. In the evening, we will try for **Rusty-barred Owl**.

Overnight: Hotel do Ypê, Itatiaia

Day 17. Transfer to São Paulo, departure

Depending on the time of your departure flight we might have time for some last birding before leaving the lodge. We will then transfer to São Paulo's GRU Airport to connect with your international flight.

Please note that the itinerary 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. In addition, we sometimes have to use a different international guide from the one advertised due to tour scheduling.

Duration: 17 days
Limit: 4 - 8
Dates: 21 September – 07 October 2023
Start: Cuiabá
End: São Paulo
Prices: US\$8,479 per person sharing (2023)

Single supplements: US\$1,125 (2023)

Price includes:

Accommodation as described in the itinerary
 Private land transportation
 Private river transportation
 Admission fees
 Tour leader and local guides
 All meals (except where otherwise indicated)
 Early breakfasts before normal breakfast times
 Airport transfers

Price excludes:

International and domestic (e.g. Cuiaba to Sao Paulo on Day 11) flights

Any activity not described in the itinerary

Meals on Day 1

Dinner on Day 17

All drinks

Any personal expenses (e.g. laundry, phone calls, minibar expenses, internet access)

Gratuities (please see our [tipping guidelines blog](#))

Trip notes:

Even though some of the accommodations, such as at Mato Grosso Hotel and Pouso Alegre, are basic, they are ideally located to maximize our bird and wildlife sightings. We include superior rooms at Piuval Lodge, we stay one night in Hotel Deville, the most comfortable accommodation in Cuiaba and, as always, we have included Hotel Pantanal Norte in Porto Jofre.

Our land transportation in the Pantanal is a large, comfortable, 15-seater van (even for small groups of four) which allows for everybody to have their own window seats.

Please note that the standard breakfast schedule for Pantanal lodges is only served from 07.00 or 07.30am. Therefore, to ensure we have all eaten before starting our days, we pay extra for an early (05.30am) breakfast option, which will allow for us to be in the field at the best time of the day, without worrying about returning to the lodge for breakfast.