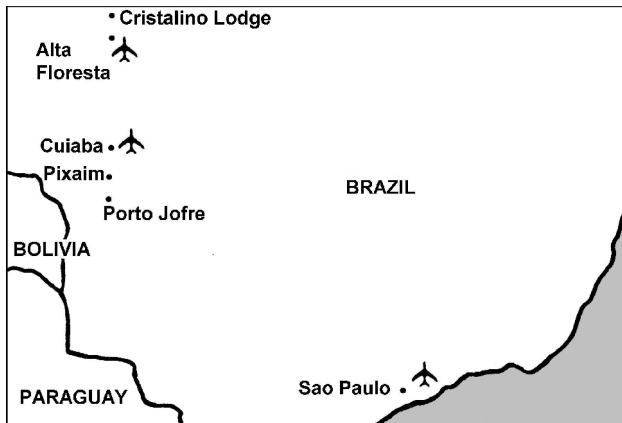


PANTANAL AND CRISTALINO

two of South America's greatest ecosystems, teaming with wildlife



We have been running tours to Brazil since 2003, and the huge bird diversity, ease of birdwatching, great mammals and friendly people keep drawing us back. This tour covers the exceptional Amazon rainforest and the incomparable Pantanal.

Having flown to Cuiaba, we will drive south and enter the Pantanal, one of the last great wildernesses in the world. This World Heritage Site is South America's primary wildlife destination. At the time of our visit, the concentration of birds has to be seen to be believed. Birding along the almost empty Transpantaneira is one of the great wildlife experiences, with up to 100 bird species per day including Jabiru and Hyacinth Macaw as well as great chances of mammals such as Southern Tamandua, Marsh Deer, Collared Peccary, Giant Otter and Jaguar.

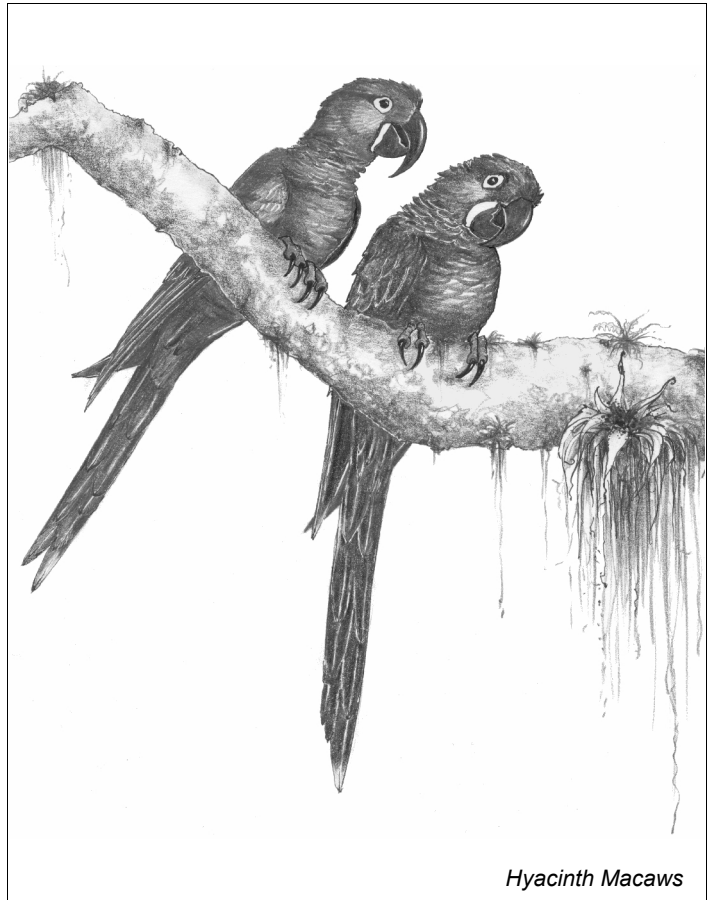
Seven nights in the Pantanal, split between three different lodges, is a superb way to appreciate the region's richness. On day nine we will fly to Alto Floresta and begin the second leg of this epic tour. We will have two nights at the Floresta Amazonia Hotel followed by four nights at the world renowned Cristalino Lodge. With its two fantastic canopy platforms and a superb trail system, there will be plenty to keep us busy. Bare-faced Curassows frequent the well kept gardens and, once we venture on to the trails, we can expect a multitude of exciting species from Gould's Toucanet and Red-fan Parrot to Bronzy Jacamar and Amazonian Umbrellabird.

ITINERARY

PANTANAL

As recently as the 1980s the Pantanal was a magnet for hunters and trappers after the spotted cats, caimans, parrots and other exotic species for which this region is famed. Now eco-tourism fuels its conservation. Seven nights in this unsurpassed area will give us plenty of time to get to know its birds and wildlife.

Having arrived in Sao Paulo on an overnight flight we will fly to Cuiaba. Driving south, we will quickly find ourselves in dry open countryside. Along the way we might see our first Red-legged Seriema and Greater Rhea, or even a Jabiru on a roadside pond. In no time we will arrive at the northern edge of the Pantanal, and check-in to the superbly situated Pousada Piuval, our home for the next two nights. There are many activities to enjoy here; boat trips on a large lake and along narrow creeks; birding on foot in the surrounding dry woodland; scanning open fields dotted with small ponds. Picui Dove, Guira Cuckoo, Plumbeous Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, White-backed Stilt, Campo Flicker, Toco Toucan,



Hyacinth Macaws

Laughing Falcon, White-headed Marsh-tyrant and Purplish Jay are amongst the more conspicuous species, and we will also be searching for scarce or retiring species such as Sunbittern, Great Rufous Woodcreeper, Grey-necked Wood-rail, Ferruginous Pygmy-owl, Mato Grosso Antbird, Blue-crowned Trogon and Aplomado Falcon. On a night drive we can expect sightings of Crab-eating Fox and Crab-eating Raccoon, and this is the best place for Giant Anteater.

On day four we will head further south down the Transpantaneira, a 147km long dirt track which takes us into the heart of the Pantanal. Along the roadside the sheer number of waterbirds is sensational, as thousands of storks, herons, egrets and ibis are concentrated in every remaining waterhole at the end of the dry season. Raptors such as Snail Kite, Black-collared Hawk and Great Black Hawk are obvious. At Campo Jofre, there is a huge area of flooded grassland. Scanning from the road we can pick out Maguari Stork, Black-bellied Whistling-duck, Buff-necked Ibis, Scarlet-headed Blackbird, and Large-billed and Yellow-billed Terns. Scores of Nacunda Nighthawks usually roost here.

We will spend three nights at the Hotel Porto Jofre, on the Cuiaba River at the south end of the road. It is a rare privilege to sit by the hotel pool and watch Wattled Jacanas, Rufescent Tiger-herons and Capybaras on the lily covered lake, then as the sun creates a brilliant red sunset, Hyacinth Macaws fly to roost and nighthawks appear. Bird flocks in the forest here frequently include a dazzling array of tanagers, tyrannulets, hummingbirds and woodcreepers.

By now the days should be heating up enough to draw Jaguars to the riverbank to rest in the cooler air. Our boat trip on the Rio Cuiaba and its tributaries, whilst affording fine views of Green Iguana, Black Skimmer, Black-capped Donacobius, Crane Hawk, and many other birds, is mostly aimed at seeing one or more of these beautiful cats.

On day 7 we will head back north, spending two nights at Pixaim. Short drives and walks will be the pattern here, looking for Monk and Golden-chevroned Parakeets, Turquoise-fronted Amazon, Black-fronted Nunbird, the smart Helmeted Manakin and Narrow-billed Woodcreepers. Rufous Cacholote, Greater Thornbird, Golden-collared Macaw and the scarce Nanday Parakeet may be seen in the more open areas. Common Pauragues and Band-tailed Nighthawks are numerous; Great Potoo and Great Horned Owl are often seen in the day, whilst a night drive gives us a chance to find Brazilian Porcupine, Brazilian Tapir and, with luck, maybe even an Ocelot.

A backwater boat ride is a gentle way to find the more secretive species, such as Sungrebe, Agami Heron, Blue-throated Piping-Guan, the endemic Chestnut-bellied Guan and all five South American Kingfishers. We will also keep an eye open for the social, noisy Giant Otters.

CRISTALINO LODGE

On day 9 we will drive back up to Cuiaba and take a short flight to Alto Floresta, a city in southern Amazonia. The Floresta Amazonia Hotel is just a short drive away, and we will have two nights here, birding in the gardens as well as an adjacent 50 hectare private reserve. White-browed Hawk, Paradise Jacamar, Black-girdled Barbet, Red-necked Aracari and Yellow-shouldered Grosbeak are among the specialities of the site, but are just a taster of what is to come over the following four days.

Cristalino Lodge needs little introduction. Located in the highly threatened southern Amazon, some 52000 hectares of rainforest have been protected by the lodge, itself adjacent to a 2 million hectare reserve. With a list of birds and mammals that would be the envy of any site, we will be kept busy for the whole of our time. Located on a black water river, the lodge offers a little bit of luxury in the heart of the rainforest. The gardens are alive with birds, from a family of Bare-faced Curassows that are best seen early in the morning to the Tawny-bellied Screech-owls and Blackish Nightjars that appear after dark.

The only access to the lodge and its various trails is by boat along the river. This offers a chance to see Agami Heron, Swallow-wing Puffbird, Ringed Woodpecker, Amazonian Umbrellabird and perhaps Razor-billed Curassow. Exploring the trails through terra firme forest, seasonally-flooded varzea, bamboo, riverine forest and secondary scrub, the number of bird species found is quite overwhelming. Brazilian Tinamou, Cryptic Forest-falcon, Dark-winged Trumpeter, Tapajos Hermit, Red-fan Parrot, Green-backed Trogon, Amazonian Motmot, Spotted Puffbird, Red-stained Woodpecker, Pompadour Cotinga, Saturnine Antshrike, Rufous-tailed Foliage-gleaner, Spix's Woodcreeper, White-crested Spadebill, Screaming Piha, Red-headed Manakin,

Dusky-capped Greenlet, Flame-crested Tanager, Short-billed Honeycreeper and Rose-breasted Chat are just a short list of the dozens of species that we may see. From the two canopy platforms we can add various raptors such as Plumbeous, Hook-billed and Double-toothed Kites and White-browed Hawk, and if we are lucky even a Harpy Eagle! Mammals are not as easy to see as in the Pantanal, but include a good diversity of primates such as White-whiskered Spider Monkey, Feline Night Monkey, Red-handed Howler Monkey and Red-nosed Saki Monkey.

Finally, after two weeks of amazing Brazilian birding, we will head back to Alta Floresta airport and fly back to Sao Paulo and onwards to the UK.

CLIMATE AND PACE

We can expect warm or hot weather throughout. Rain is likely at some time during the trip, but normally comes in short sharp showers. In the Pantanal, breakfast will be around 7am, giving a little time to watch around the gardens, before venturing into the wider area. At Cristalino, breakfast is typically at 6am, giving us time to make the most of the productive mornings (afternoons can be hot and comparatively quiet). Basic fitness is all that is required. Full days will be spent in the field with short/medium length walks on the flat.

ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD

Full-board accommodation is provided with two nights at Pousada Piuval, three nights at the Hotel Porto Jofre, two nights at the Hotel Pantanal Mato Grosso, Pixaim, two nights at the Floresta Amazonia Hotel and four nights at Cristalino Lodge. The hotels are of a good/excellent standard, all with en suite bathrooms.

PRICE INCLUDES

All birdwatching excursions with Bird Holidays leader and expert local guide, full-board accommodation (starting with lunch on 29th, ending with breakfast on 11th), soft drinks at meal times, bottled water throughout, local transport by coach, all domestic and international flights.

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED

Travel insurance. Personal items, alcoholic drinks, laundry.

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

Return flight from London Heathrow to Cuiaba, returning from Alto Floresta (both via Sao Paulo), using the scheduled services of LATAM. Outbound flight departs late evening, return flight arrives back mid-afternoon. **Domestic flights from Manchester and other UK airports are available on this tour. See booking form for details.**

15 nights including two overnight flights:	28th July to 12th August 2018
Principal leader:	Paul J Willoughby
Local guide:	Ricardo Parrini
Maximum group size:	12 clients with one leader and a local guide
Cost with discount (if you book before 14th April 2018):	£5980 per person sharing (£820 single supplement)
Full Cost:	£6130 per person sharing
Deposit:	£1000