

ITINERARY
BRAZIL: PANTANAL & ATLANTIC RAINFOREST
10 – 23 AUGUST 2024



August 10th: Arrival in São Paulo. Transfer to Itatiaia National Park.

The tour begins in the morning at the international airport in São Paulo, where the group meets with our excellent local guide. From São Paulo we drive east for 250 km (ca. 4 hours drive) to the famous Itatiaia National Park, Brazil's oldest national park and one of the top birding destinations in Brazil. Our lovely hotel is located inside the national park, nestled within the fabulous montane Atlantic rainforest with great birding at our doorstep. We arrive in the early afternoon and kick things off birding on the hotel grounds, where we will see our first Dusky-legged Guans and Slaty-breasted Wood-Rails dashing around at the forest edge, while the busy feeders at the hotel attract White-throated Hummingbird, Brazilian Ruby, Scale-throated Hermit and Violet-capped Woodnymph, with fruit feeders bringing in some real stunners including **Green-headed Tanager**, Chestnut-bellied Euphonia, Golden-winged Cacique and Olive-green Tanager. We will have three nights at our historic hotel in the park.

Night at Hotel do Ypê in Itatiaia National Park.



August 11th: Itatiaia National Park

Itatiaia National Park covers a broad elevational range from 500 meters above sea level up to 2800 meters. Our hotel sits in the middle of that range at about 1250 meters elevation where it is surrounded by humid montane rainforest overlooking the lower slopes of the Mantiqueira mountain range. Right around the hotel, there is plenty to see, from Blue-winged Macaw and Yellow-fronted Woodpecker to the spectacular **Saffron Toucanet**, which sometimes even visits the fruit feeders just outside the restaurant. The park has many excellent birding trails into the beautiful Atlantic forest replete with a tremendous diversity of bromeliads and orchids. Stands of bamboo in the forest are home to several endemic specialties, including the likes of Black-billed Scythebill, White-bearded Antshrike, White-collared Foliage-gleaner, Giant Antshrike, Such's Antthrush, Fork-tailed Tody-Tyrant and much more. We'll watch for fruiting *jussara* palms that draw in a dizzying variety of frugivorous birds including Red-breasted Toucan and Spot-billed Toucanet, Red-ruffed Fruitcrow, Bare-throated Bellbird, and several species of thrushes and tanagers. The forest undergrowth is home to evocative endemics such as the Slaty Bristlefront, White-bibbed Antbird, Half-collared Sparrow, and Rufous Gnateater. Night birding around the hotel might turn up Tawny-browed Owl.

Night at Hotel do Ypê in Itatiaia National Park.



August 12th: Upper range of Itatiaia National Park

Today we bird the Agulhas Negras road, a rough track that winds up through montane Atlantic rainforest, stunted elfin forest, and rocky high-altitude grasslands in the border areas between the states of Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, and São Paulo. We are likely to bird our way up to the ranger station at 2450 meters elevation, and our targets along the way include Rufous-tailed Antbird, Large-tailed Antshrike, Black-capped Piprites, Serra do Mar Tyrannulet, Buff-throated and Bay-chested Warbling-Finches, Rufous-backed Antwireo, Sharp-billed Treehunter, and Diademed and Brassy-breasted Tanagers. Higher up we'll get to a more open area where Green-crowned Plovercrest and the endemic Itatiaia Spinetail occur. The eerie whistles of Black-and-gold Cotingas are usually heard all around up here, and with some careful scanning of the treetops, we may find a male perched up in the open. In the afternoon we bird open country and pasture land at a lower elevation, with an entirely different set of birds including a number of species we will not find elsewhere on the tour, including Streamer-tailed Tyrant, Yellow-rumped Marshbird, Tawny-headed Swallow, Firewood-gatherer, White-eared Puffbird, and Curl-crested Jay. This is a full-day trip away from the hotel with a picnic lunch.

Night at Hotel do Ypê in Itatiaia National Park.

August 13th: Itatiaia to Ubatuba

After some final birding at Itatiaia in the morning, perhaps visiting the lower reaches of the park to look for Pin-tailed Manakin, Southern Antpiper, and **Blue-naped Chlorophonia**, we depart and drive down the coastal Serra do Mar mountain range to the seaside resort town of Ubatuba.



We should arrive in Ubatuba in the early afternoon, and we start our time in the lowlands with a visit to a private residence with some of the best hummingbird feeders in all of Brazil.

Stunning hummingbirds such as Festive Coquette, Saw-billed Hermit, Brazilian Ruby, Sombre Hummingbird, and White-chinned Sapphire are the stars at the nectar feeders, while ravenous Brazilian and **Red-necked Tanagers** compete with Red-rumped Caciques, Blue Dacnis and Green Honeycreepers at the banana feeders. The forested surroundings here are good for Blond-crested Woodpecker, Slaty Bristlefront, Scaled Antbird, and Long-billed Wren.

Night in Ubatuba.



August 14th: Ubatuba

We have a full day to bird the lowland forests at the base of the Serra do Mar around Ubatuba. Many tracks lead away from the developed coastal plain into the beautiful humid forests at the foot of the mountain range, and we will split our time between two or three different sites today. We'll almost certainly visit an old cocoa plantation that is known as a stakeout for the diminutive endemic Buff-throated Purpletuft.

The secondary growth and overgrown cocoa groves are good for a nice range of lowland specialties including **Black-cheeked Gnateater**, Ferruginous Antbird, Star-throated Antwren, Tufted Antshrike, Spot-backed Antshrike, São Paulo Tyrannulet, and Orange-eyed Thornbird. We'll scan the edges of forest clearings for Buff-bellied Puffbirds sitting in the canopy, and watch the skies for soaring White-necked and Mantled Hawks and Black Hawk-Eagle, while flocks of Maroon-bellied Parakeets, Plain Parakeets, and Pileated Parrots might zip through above us.

Night in Ubatuba.



August 15th: Sitio Macuquinho

This morning we leave early from Ubatuba and climb up into the Serra do Mar mountains again, driving 2.5 hours to the Sitio Macuquinho, a small family-run reserve with a surprising diversity and terrific feeder setup. The fruit and hummingbird feeders attract a nice selection of colorful birds, the majority of which will by now be familiar to us (Festive Coquette, Brazilian Ruby, Ruby-crowned, Golden-chevroned, and Green-headed Tanagers), but there will be some new faces (Sapphire-spangled Emerald, Black-legged Dacnis, Burnished-buff Tanager). The reserve has a compact trail system that offers good chances for us to see Red-and-white Crake, White-breasted Tapaculo, Bertoni's Antbird, and Blackish-blue Seedeater. A forest hide sometimes rewards patient birders with sightings of Brown Tinamou or Ruddy Quail-Dove, along with Black-goggled Tanagers and Half-collared Sparrows. A nearby cattail marsh at the headwaters of the Tiete River has a few pairs of the Endangered endemic Marsh Antwren. The antwren was only discovered in the 1990s in southern Brazil, and when the population that occurs on the outskirts of São Paulo, South America's largest metropolis, was discovered in 2004, it was already on the brink of extinction. We will make a special effort to find this rare and threatened bird. At the end of the day, we drive another 2 hours to São Paulo, where we stay in a comfortable hotel near the airport.

Night at São Paulo.

August 16th: Fly to Cuiabá and transfer to the Pantanal

In the morning we fly from São Paulo to Cuiabá, the busy capital of Mato Grosso state in central Brazil. Here we'll be met by a new van and driver, and we depart for the famed Pantanal, the world's largest freshwater wetland. After about an hour on the road, the scrubby rather arid brushland begins to thin out as we descend gradually into the low-lying sedimentary depression where the Pantanal sits. As we reach the small town of Poconé, the paved road ends with a jarring suddenness: we have reached the Transpantaneira, the dusty "highway" which strikes 150 kilometers into the northern Pantanal. As we bump along we'll begin to notice egrets, herons, and raptors alongside the road attending water-filled ditches and drying-out watering holes. Our first stop in the Pantanal is the lovely Pousada Piuval, certainly one of the top lodges in the Pantanal, where we should arrive in time for lunch. After checking in, we'll get right to the birding, exploring the marshes, forest patches, and intervening drier open areas on the expansive lodge property. Piuval is home to a good population of the endangered **Hyacinth Macaw**, and getting great views of this emblematic species will be our number one priority this afternoon.

Night at Pousada Piuval.

August 17th: Pousada Piuval

Pousada Piuval hosts a variety of habitats on its vast property, and there will be plenty to keep us busy during our two nights at this location. The open dry areas along the lodge entrance road tend to be good for Guira Cuckoo, White-rumped Monjita, White Woodpecker, and Blue-crowned Parakeet. Areas of gallery forest and dry forest host several species we may not find elsewhere during the trip, and we will be on the lookout for White-eyed Attila, Amazonian Motmot, Mato Grosso Antbird, White-lored Spinetail, and Saffron-billed Sparrow in the mornings. Rarer but also possible here are Black-bellied Antwren and Chaco Puffbird. Piuval is a particularly good area for several species of cracids, and we hope to find Bare-faced Curassow, Blue-throated Piping-Guan, and Chestnut-bellied Guan, the latter an endangered species that has its stronghold in the Brazilian Pantanal. Open areas between natural forest patches are good for Red-legged Seriema, which only occurs in drier parts of the Pantanal, along with the elegant Whistling Heron, Greater Rhea, and Nacunda Nighthawk. The forests themselves could yield Red-billed Scythebill or its massive cousin, the Great Rufous Woodcreeper. Piuval is also home to a small population of **Hyacinth Macaws**, and we will be certain to visit either the nesting or feeding areas of these emblematic birds of the Pantanal. After dinner, we can take a night safari to search for night birds and mammals, including perhaps the enigmatic Giant Anteater, along with good chances for Crab-eating Fox, Brazilian Rabbit, and Crab-eating Raccoon, with larger mammals such as Brazilian Tapir and even Jaguar being longer shots.

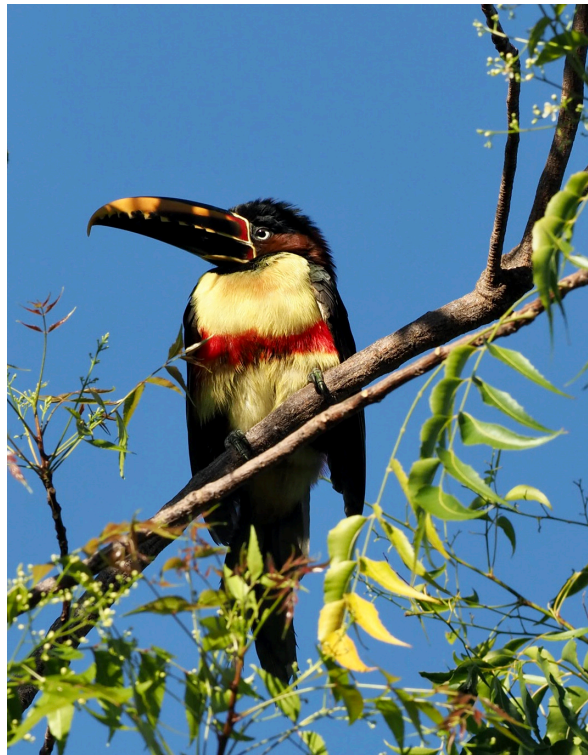
Night at Pousada Piuval.



August 18th: Transpantaneira to Porto Jofre

After breakfast we depart from Piuval to make our way south down the Transpantaneira, the famous Pantanal highway. Highway is a bit of a misnomer, as the Transpantaneira is mostly a dusty, elevated road that strikes 150 kilometers into the heart of the Pantanal. We will spend most of the day birding from the roadsides, making many birding and wildlife photography stops as we drink in the dry-season spectacle of hundreds of herons, egrets, kingfishers, terns, and storks thronging the diminishing watering holes and drying-up pools as the floodwaters recede and evaporate, leaving hapless fish exposed to the hungry eyes of predators. While a number of the worst bridges have been replaced with sturdy concrete bridges in recent years, some of the 140+ bridges we cross on the drive to Porto Jofre are still rickety wooden structures that we cross carefully, or detour around in spots where the surrounding marshes have dried out enough to cross in a vehicle. It's all a bit of an adventure as we make our way into the heart of the Pantanal. We stop for lunch at a riverside hotel, and we can take a short break there, enjoying the bird feeders that attract Orange-backed Troupial, **Chestnut-eared Aracari**, and sometimes even Toco Toucans. In the afternoon we shall give special attention to the Campos do Jofre area, a wide expanse of open, flooded savannas where dozens of Southern Screamers, hundreds of Capybara, and thousands of Yacare Caiman are easily found. Careful searching of this area might reveal Maguari Stork, the rare Caiman Lizard, or if we are fortunate, a Yellow Anaconda. In the late afternoon, we arrive at the bank of the Cuiabá River and transfer to our comfortable live-aboard yacht, the Jacaré, where we spend the next three nights in search of Jaguars.

Night aboard the Jacaré yacht.



August 19th & 20th: River trips searching for Jaguars.

We have two full days to explore the Cuiabá River and its tributaries to search for **Jaguars** as they rest in the shade or while they hunt for Capybaras and caiman along the river banks. The Encontro das Aguas State Park upstream from Porto Jofre is without a doubt the best location in the world to observe Jaguars in the wild, and during our two days on the river we have excellent chances of laying eyes on multiple individuals of these powerful cats – make sure you have plenty of memory cards for your cameras! There is plenty else to see during our time on the rivers, and we should encounter Giant Otters, Blue-throated Piping-Guan, Jabiru, Roseate Spoonbill, Black-collared Hawk, Blue-crowned Trogon, Little Cuckoo, and much more. Exposed sandbars will have breeding colonies of Black Skimmers and Yellow-billed and Large-billed Terns and dapper pairs of Pied Lapwings and Collared Plovers. Our motor launches have comfortable padded seats, can be equipped with folding canopies to protect us from the intense tropical sun, and have strong four-stroke engines allowing us to reach all of the best locations quickly and quietly. Our local guides maintain constant radio contact with other boats, so we will be quickly alerted to nearby **Jaguar** sightings.

Nights aboard the Jacaré yacht.





August 21st: Transfer to SouthWild Pantanal.

After breakfast aboard the Jacaré we disembark at Porto Jofre and board our air-conditioned van again, heading back up the Transpantaneira to the final stop of our tour, the SouthWild Pantanal Lodge on the Pixaim River, where we spend two nights. During our first afternoon at SouthWild Pantanal, we shall take a boat trip on the Pixaim. The slow-moving river is relatively narrow and jam-packed with birds and other wildlife. Highlights typically include all five South American kingfisher species, a parade of herons and egrets, Great and **Black-collared Hawks**, and both the unique **Sunbittern** and the lone South American representative of the finfoot family, the Sungrebe. If we are fortunate, we might even find the shy and elusive Agami Heron, or encounter a family group of **Giant Otters**. In the evening we head into the nearby forest to visit a blind where we have a good chance of seeing Ocelot, a striking species of wild cat that is elusive and hard to find throughout its range across the Americas.

Night at SouthWild Pantanal.



August 22nd: SouthWild Pantanal

Our final day in the Pantanal will be spent at the SouthWild Pantanal Lodge where we can enjoy yet another boat trip on the Pixaim River again viewing **Jabirus and Capped Herons** among many other great birds! We're likely to be down to just a handful of target birds by now, and these might include Helmeted Manakin and Stripe-necked Tody-Tyrant, which we can search for in the gallery forests that flank the river. The scrubby pastures along the lodge entrance road are usually productive, with chances for Cinereous-breasted Spinetail, Chotoy Spinetail, White-tailed Goldenthrout, White-bellied Seed eater, and White-naped Xenopsaris here. We may revisit the Ocelot hide this evening.

Night at SouthWild Pantanal.



**August 23rd: Fly to São Paulo.
Outbound international flights.**

We return to Cuiabá in the morning to catch domestic flights to São Paulo. You may book late outbound international flights departing from São Paulo.

End of tour.

PRICE

\$6400 USD PRICE PER PERSON BASED ON DOUBLE OCCUPANCY (ADD \$700 FOR SINGLE SUPPLEMENT)

PRICE INCLUDES

14 days in Brazil – 13 nights lodging.

Professional local bilingual bird guide with spotting scope. Bird species checklist, which will be reviewed each evening.

Transportation in a spacious van with a dedicated driver, all boat rides, and internal/ domestic flights to Cuiaba.

Accommodations in all hotels/lodges.

All meals until breakfast on 8/23. Fresh water in the van to refill bottles.

All park entrance fees.

NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

International airfare to and from Sao Paulo (GRU airport) and airport taxes.

Tips to guide, drivers, and porters.

Travel insurance (We highly recommend purchasing travel insurance. If you need to cancel your trip due to medical or other reasons, this insurance will protect you.)

Additional extras offered in hotels (Laundry, spa, phone calls, etc.)

Alcoholic beverages. Sodas if not listed on the meal plan. Any other expense or extras not listed as included above.

POLICIES AND ADDITIONAL NOTES

- *A first payment of \$2000 will be required for holding your space on this tour.*
- *Ninety (90) days before arrival (5/9/24) the balance due payment is required.*
- *If you have a cancellation of the trip before 90 days an administrative fee of \$50 is required and attempts to recover deposits will be made by LifeBird Tours. But please consider these refunds will depend on individual hotel policies.*
- *If you have a cancellation of the trip between 60 to 30 days an administrative fee of \$100 is required and all attempts to recover deposits will be made by LifeBird Tours. But please consider these refunds will depend on individual hotel policies.*
- *Less than 30 days before arrival all monies will be forfeited. No refunds will be made if you leave the trip for any reason, whether voluntary or involuntary. No refunds will be made for services not utilized.*