

Cristalino Jungle Lodge Extension (pre-Pantanal tour)

13 to 17 October (3 days)

Cost: £1700*

*if a group of 6 and above

*An internal flight from Cuiaba to Alta Floresta and back to Cuiaba is included in the price

Single supplement: £190

The eco-friendly Cristalino Jungle Lodge is an amazing property located on the bank of the Cristalino River and in 29,000 acres of pristine Amazonian rainforest. Not only that the lodge has been voted by National Geographic one of the best lodges in Brazil and it offers an unparalleled luxury and comfort in the middle of a true wilderness, it also plays an important role in protecting primary rainforest and contributes to conservation projects in the southern basin of the Brazilian Amazon. With a bird list of nearly 600 species and a phenomenal number of localised and endemic specialties, it is a bird and wildlife haven, not to be missed! If we add to this, delicious food, not to mention an authentic caipirinhas (the Brazilian national cocktail) served by friendly staff, we have an ideal combination for an exceptional tropical experience.

So, for those wishing to enhance the time spent in Brazil, a three-night stay in Cristalino Jungle Lodge before the main Pantanal tour is on offer. The lodge is located only a short distance from Cuiaba, where our main Pantanal tour begins.

Day 1

After you arrive to Cuicaba from Sau Paulo in the morning, you will board a short flight from Cuiaba to Alta Floresta. From here, the transfer to Cristalino Jungle Lodge is merely an hour by dirt road and 15 minutes by boat on the Teles Pires River. Even the short trip along the river can produce some surprises and our introduction to the Amazonian forest could include White-banded and Whitewinged Swallows, Red-and-green and Blue-and-yellow Macaws, Amazonian Umbrellabird and the Red-throated Piping-Guan perching on the trees along the banks of the river.

Days 2-3

We will spend two full days exploring the network of trails around the lodge and surveying the canopy of the forest. This, however, could prove to be challenging and a visit to the two 52-metre towers will provide not only a fabulous view over the canopy of this pristine forest, but will enhance our chances to see some canopy specialties such as Pompadour Cotinga, Curl-crested Aracari, Olive Oropendolas, Long-billed Woodcreeper, Amazonian Umbrellabird and a myriad of colourful tanagers, toucans and parrots. We will target here species such as the Cryptic Forest Falcon, Kawall's Amazon, Paradise Jacamar, Amazonian Royal Flycatcher, Collared and Rufous-necked Puffbirds and the Pavonine Quetzal. Although very scarce, we might be lucky to glimpse a Harpy Eagle.

We will also explore the riverine forest by taking a boat ride, where likely encounters include Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Great Black-Hawk, Swallow-winged and Brown-banded Puffbirds, Pied Lapwing, Amazonian Tyrannulet, White-chinned Sapphire and Spotted Tody-Flycatcher, Green Ibis, Green-and-rufous Kingfisher and Long-billed Woodcreeper. Congregations of Army ant swarms, rather commonly found here, attract a selection of specialties such as Yellow-browed and Bare-eyed Antbirds, Curve-billed Scythebill and Spotted Antpitta. We will also target some of the more challenging species including the reclusive Zigzag Heron and phenomenal Razor-billed Curassow. However, you might prefer to have a leisurely moment on the floating deck in front of our lodge, which is ideal for wildlife viewing or explore the lodge's garden, where blooming Cecropias attracts a numbers of toucans, aracaris, parrots and fruitcrows. Venturing out at night could also be productive with, perhaps, Crested and Black-banded Owls being major attractions.

Mammals here will also make our blood racing and likely encounters include the Capybara, Southern Tamandua, Giant River Otter, Brazilian Agouti, Tayra and Paca. But, perhaps most impressive is the selection of seven primate species in the area, including Night Monkey, Dusky Titi Monkey, Brown Capuchin, Red-handed Howler Monkey, White-Whiskered Spider Monkey and the endemic Red-Nosed Bearded Saki Monkey.

Day 4

If time allows, we will do some early morning birding, but soon after breakfast, we will transfer to Alta Floresta and catch a short flight back to Cuiaba where we will start the main tour: *Birds and Wildlife of the Pantanal and Cerrado*.