



VICTOR EMANUEL NATURE TOURS

ITINERARY

BRAZIL: SOUTHERN PANTANAL BIRDING & WILDLIFE SPECTACULAR AUGUST 16-28, 2025

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Hyacinth Macaw, Southern Pantanal © Dr. Charles Munn

For many years, our tours to the famed Pantanal region of southern Brazil have brought exposure to some of the world's greatest birding and wildlife spectacles. Our Pantanal tours have traditionally operated in the north of that vast region. Thanks to our special relationship with Dr. Charles Munn and his company SouthWild, we have recently discovered the richness of the Southern Pantanal, an area only now coming to light for non-Brazilians as an important ecotourism destination. Compared to the north, the south offers similar birds and wildlife, but key differences exist, and this brand-new tour to the Southern Pantanal makes

for an equally outstanding nature-based getaway—a wonderful choice for both first-time and returning visitors alike.

Within the seasonally-flooded basin of the Paraguay River, the expansive lowlands of the Pantanal are home to countless numbers of waterbirds, raptors, and other wildlife. The abundance and diversity of large mammals and birds are reminiscent of the great wildlife spectacles of Africa.

By bus, boat, and on foot, we will explore the diversity of habitats that together comprise the world's largest tropical wetland ecosystem. Mammal viewing is of high importance, with Giant Otter, Giant Anteater, Brazilian Tapir, Black-and-gold Howler Monkey, and Jaguar—South America's greatest predator—topping the list, but we will also anticipate encounters with some of the continent's most remarkable birds including Greater Rhea, Bare-faced Curassow, Red-legged Seriema, Jabiru, Southern Screamer, the incomparable Hyacinth Macaw, and Toco Toucan, in addition to many other species.



Jaguar in the Pantanal © Luís Claudio Marigo

A central feature of this trip is a five-night stay at the Pantanal Jungle Lodge, on the banks of the Miranda River. Boat excursions on the river will produce a superb variety of wildlife. Birds should be plentiful, with Jabiru, herons, ibis, several species of kingfishers, and a diversity of guans, pigeons, toucans, parrots, woodpeckers, and orioles all likely. Here too are herds of grazing Capybara, riverbanks lined with Yacaré Caiman, and Black-and-gold Howler Monkeys lounging in the treetops.

We'll then spend three nights in cerrado country in the community of Bonito. Here, we'll seek a fresh suite of birds and mammals against the backdrop of the Bodoquena Mountains. Amid forest-ringed canyons, rolling grasslands, lush gallery forest, and crystal-clear rivers, we may find regional prizes such as Long-winged Harrier, Laughing and Aplomado falcons, King Vulture, flocks of Red-and-green Macaws, Blaze-winged Parakeet, Campo Flicker, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, Amazonian Motmot, Green-backed Trogon, and Great Rufous Woodcreeper. All the while we will be on the lookout for large mammals including Giant Anteater, Brazilian Tapir, Pampas Deer, Brown Brocket Deer, and Brown Capuchin. We will also present an optional opportunity to snorkel in a shallow, crystal-clear spring in the company of beautiful tropical fish.

August is a dry-season month in the Pantanal region, which benefits our trip in several important ways: the chances for rain are low, the wildlife is concentrated, and the presence of biting insects relatively light.



August 16-17, Days 1-2: Depart USA for São Paulo, Brazil; Connect to Campo Grande. Participants will depart the USA on the evening of August 16 and arrive in Brazil on the morning of August 17 into São Paulo's Guarulhos International Airport (airport code GRU), in time to connect with a flight to Campo Grande (airport code CGR). Upon arrival in Campo Grande, you will be met by a representative of our ground operator who will provide transportation to the Hotel Deville Prime, located about 20 minutes from the airport.

Travel notes: Those wishing to minimize the risk of misconnecting or other travel delays should consider arriving a day early in São Paulo or Campo Grande in order to be well-rested for the start of our tour. Most direct flights to São Paulo are overnight flights, but options for day flights are available. Our first group meeting will occur on the evening of August 17. Depending on the airline flight schedule, your flight from Sao Paulo may not arrive into Campo Grande that night in time for the initial

group meeting. If this is the case, we recommend you arrive in Campo Grande on August 16. Should you choose to arrive in Brazil early, upon request, VENT will be happy to assist with air arrangements, additional lodging and transfers.

The Deville brand is synonymous with high quality, and the Hotel Deville Prime in Campo Grande certainly meets expectations. With spacious and well-appointed accommodations, a restaurant serving high-quality food, and an inviting swimming pool, the hotel is a perfect place to unwind and recuperate following the long international flight.

We will gather as a group in the hotel lobby at 6:00 p.m. for a trip welcome and orientation, with a chance to meet your fellow travelers and trip leaders. Dinner will be in the hotel restaurant, which serves very good food.

NIGHT: Hotel Deville Prime, Campo Grande (August 17)

August 18, Day 3: Prosa State Park & “Avenue of the Macaws”. Campo Grande is a city of 850,000 people that serves as the gateway to the Southern Pantanal. It is the capital of Mato Grosso do Sul state, which at 138,000 square miles is nearly the size of the state of Montana. This state holds 60% of the Pantanal, while the even larger state to the north, Mato Grosso, holds 30%. The countries of Bolivia and Paraguay hold only 8% and 2%, respectively. Although the Pantanal is a primary attraction of our time in Brazil, we will first spend a day in Campo Grande exploring Prosa State Park, a dry forest habitat with a birdlife largely dissimilar to that of the Pantanal.

Our hotel is situated only a mile from 334-acre Prosa State Park, a remarkably birdy urban forest reserve that exists in a quieter part of the city. A visit to the park is always rewarding, and affords an excellent introduction to the local avifauna. We will spend the entire morning birding along the paved road that extends deep into the park from the entrance gate. Everything we see will be new, but we will also make a point of pinpointing those harder to find species. Among the many alluring birds we may see are Picazuro Pigeon, Gilded Hummingbird, Buff-necked Ibis, Blue-crowned Trogon, Amazonian Motmot, Peach-fronted Parakeet, Large-billed Antwren, Planalto Woodcreeper, Sooty-fronted Spinetail, Helmeted Manakin, Short-crested Flycatcher, Rufous-bellied Thrush, and Burnished-buff and Swallow tanagers among many other species possible.



Blue-crowned Trogon © Andrew Whittaker

Around mid-day we will break for lunch and an afternoon siesta before returning to the park in the afternoon for a second round of birding. Many of the birds will be familiar by now, but invariably our time in the field will produce new experiences. It is worth pointing out that the park is also home to some non-avian attractions including Black-and-gold Howler Monkey, South American Coati, and Red-footed Tortoise.

NIGHT: Hotel Deville Prime, Campo Grande

August 19, Day 4: Transfer to Pantanal Jungle Lodge at Passo Do Lontra. Our day will start with a pre-breakfast excursion to the “Avenue of the Macaws,” located on the edge of Prosa State Park, where we will have the opportunity to observe wild, free-flying macaws, parrots, and other birds right in the heart of the city, before returning to the hotel for breakfast. Afterward, we will depart Campo Grande for the overland trip into the Pantanal.

The Avenue of the Macaws is an improbable spectacle, a wide street that runs through Campo Grande where numbers of pairs of Blue-and-yellow and Red-bellied macaws nest in a row of dead and dying Royal Palms that runs the length of the thoroughfare. We will arrive early enough (shortly after 6:00 a.m.) to ensure we are on-site before the birds depart their nest sites for the day in search of food around the city. Unlikely as the setting may appear, the opportunity to enjoy close encounters with these beautiful macaw species provides an unforgettable experience. Of note, in 2016, the city officially renamed itself the “City of the Macaws” in honor of these now abundant large birds, which are seen not only here, but throughout the city—a testament to what some conservationists call “the Brazilian Ecological Miracle,” a phrase that

speaks to the decline of hunting, killing, and trapping the country's native wildlife. While observing the macaws, we may also see Red-shouldered Macaws, Yellow-faced Parrot, and White-eyed Parakeet.



Blue-and-yellow Macaws, Prosa State Park © Andrew Whittaker

We will return to the hotel by 8:00 a.m. to enjoy a wonderful spread at the hotel's extensive Brazilian-style buffet breakfast.

We'll depart the hotel soon after breakfast and begin making our way toward the famous Pantanal. Our destination is Passo Do Lontra, four-and-a-half hours to the northwest of Campo Grande. Our journey will lead through small towns and mainly rural areas with dry forest and fragments of *cerrado*, the Brazilian term for a tropical savanna with varying degrees of short, scattered trees. Our first Purplish Jays and Toco Toucans will most certainly be encountered en route, the latter showing off their enormous, flashy orange bills and, in flight, contrasting white rumps.

Prior to entering the Pantanal basin, we will view the scenic hills of the Serra de Maracajú. This sedimentary formation crosses much of the state from north to south. The most striking landmark of these low mountains is the Morro do Chapéu (Hat Hill), covered by forest and sporting steep sandstone cliffs. We might stop for a minute to snap a few photos of this classically-Brazilian landscape. For the last eight kilometers of our journey, we'll travel a good-quality dirt road leading due north into the heart of the magical Southern Pantanal, where our adventure begins. We'll break-up the journey with a stop or two en route to use a bathroom and stretch our legs.

Lying in the seasonally flooded basin of the Paraguay River, these vast lowlands are home to countless numbers of waterbirds, raptors, and other wildlife. We may begin seeing our first waterfowl, herons, ibis, storks, raptors, and kingfishers perched along the river courses we pass along the way. Crossing the cement bridge over the Miranda River, we'll travel along a forested entrance road that leads to the Pantanal

Jungle Lodge. Upon arrival we will head to the air-conditioned dining room where a buffet-style Brazilian lunch will already be laid out.

Nestled amid gallery forest on the banks of the Miranda River, the Pantanal Jungle Lodge will serve as home for the next five nights. We will delight to the fact that birds and wildlife surround us at all times. Tall trees in the front yard between the lodge and river offer shade, and a raised wooden walkway runs the length of the lodge, with views overlooking the Miranda River. Each guest room offers two-chambered accommodations and is equipped with silent split-style air-conditioners in the inner (small) bedroom, which cools the room very quickly and well. A swimming pool beckons to those who seek a relaxing, cool dip during the warmest part of the day.

Wildlife is literally at our doorstep. With extensively forested grounds and riverfront habitat offering exceptional birding, a stay here is a true delight. Songbirds are conspicuous, and daily lists of well over 100 species are commonplace! Among the non-passerine prizes frequenting the lodge area is the massive Jabiru. Here, these storks are astonishingly easy to see as they fish along the riverbanks directly in front of the lodge.



Jabiru, Pantanal © Kevin Zimmer

Following some afternoon down time, we will enjoy the first of many marvelous excursions on the Miranda River aboard comfortable, motorized boats. Most likely, we will head upriver to a secluded backwater tributary named the Rio Vermelho (Red River). On this outing, we will enjoy our first close-up encounters with many waterbirds and songbirds, hordes of Yacaré Caiman, and families of Capybara. At dusk, Band-tailed Nighthawks may be seen hawking for insects over the river while hundreds of Greater and Lesser

Bulldog Bats can also be observed leaving daytime tree roosts to feed low over the river. The former species is the larger of the two and sports a rich orange-red pelage and is an expert fisherman. These bats use echolocation to detect water ripples made by the fish upon which they prey. Singing Common Pauraques will welcome us back to the lodge where in short order we'll enjoy an evening drink followed by a fine buffet dinner that includes fresh river fish among other fare.

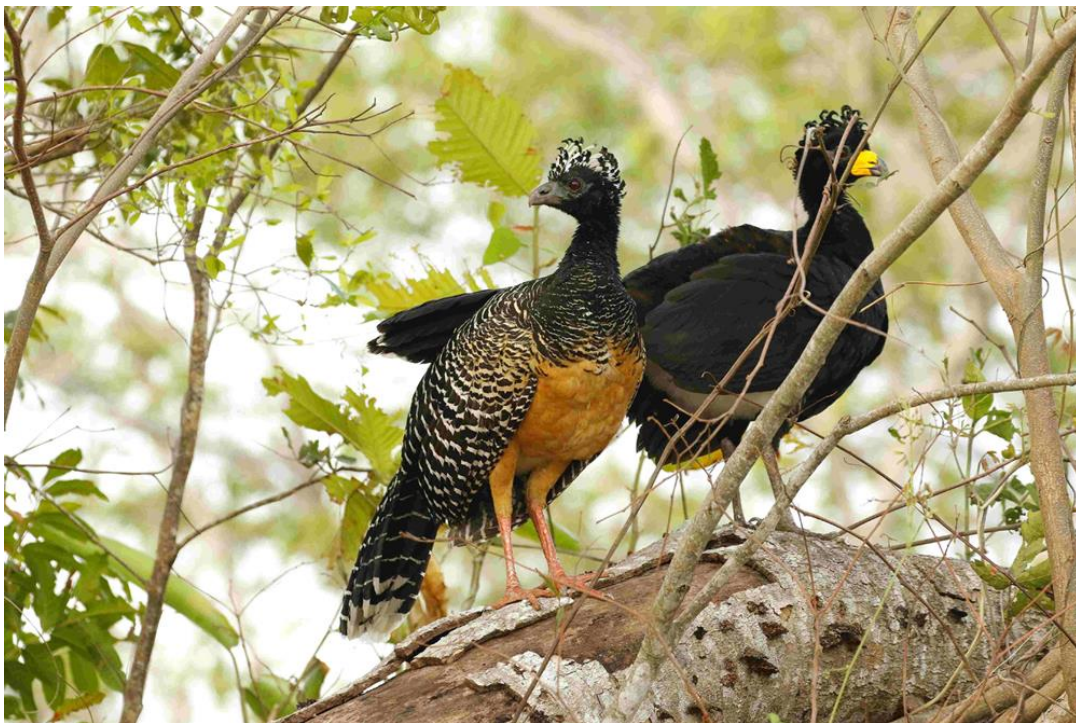
NIGHT: Pantanal Jungle Lodge, Passo do Lontra

August 20-23, Days 5-8: Exploring the Miranda River and Southern Pantanal. The Southern Pantanal is crisscrossed by numerous tributaries of the Paraguay River. The Miranda River is one of the principal tributaries and serves as the backdrop against which all our activities will be based for the duration of our stay at the Pantanal Jungle Lodge. We will have four full days to explore the lodge grounds, the surrounding riverine and gallery forests and other habitats, and, of course, the river itself as well as the Rio Vermelho tributary. Our activities will vary from day to day but will generally consist of some combination of bird walks and boat rides.

The birding at the Pantanal Jungle Lodge is relaxed and easy as the birds are quite tame, which thus provides for excellent photographic opportunities.

The Lodge

Each morning a tremendous Pantanal dawn chorus greets us, comprised of a cacophony of multiple pairs of Chaco Chachalacas, the local pair of raucous Plumbeous Ibis, pairs of talkative Turquoise-fronted Parrots, and the delightful musical duets of Thrush-like Wrens. Early in the morning we often find the local pair of Jabiru walking elegantly around as a Cocoi Heron fishes in the small waterhole in front of the lodge and Capybaras graze contentedly on the short lawn in front of the lodge.



Bare-faced Curassows, Pantanal Jungle Lodge © Andrew Whittaker

We will keep our binoculars close at hand at all times, even during meals. Various bird feeders around the lodge are especially active in the mornings and afternoons, while the forested grounds in front of the lodge attract a multitude of interesting birds. Flocks of various species pile into the feeders, where surprisingly, even Muscovy Ducks can be seen flying in at times to feast on the seeds. It is strange to see these big ducks feeding among Yellow-chevroned Parakeets, Red-crested Cardinals, Grayish Baywings, and Saffron Finches. Other regular visitors are Pale-vented Pigeon and Scaled Dove, Monk Parakeet, and mobs of smaller birds, including noisy Chestnut-capped Blackbirds and flashy Yellow-billed and Red-crested cardinals. Spectacular Bare-faced Curassows often walk below the feeders picking up scraps that fall from above.

Even with this activity there is always more to see. And perhaps of greatest interest is a regular group of 12-16 Hyacinth Macaws that have made their home here! These macaws provide a spellbinding sight as they fly through the trees, calling frequently to each other and showing off their incredible colors. These iconic birds visit the feeders several times a day either to snack on Acuri Palm nuts or drink from a small waterhole in the open at 25 yards from the dining room. It is a real privilege to be able to watch close at hand as the birds labor to crack one of these three-inch-long, oval palm nuts.



Hyacinth Macaw © Andrew Whittaker

Take it from us: It will be a challenge to leave for outings away from the lodge, especially in the mornings, when it's rush-hour at the feeders!

The Forest

The Southern Pantanal is a mosaic of extensive savanna formations and gallery (riverine) forests. On at least one morning at the lodge, we will spend a couple of hours after breakfast exploring the nearby forest on foot, which will be alive with birdlife. This outing includes birding along excellent forest trails and river banks and also along a lightly-used elevated dirt road through open riverside woodland. Highlights should include small groups of Chestnut-eared Aracaris, pairs of stunning Green-barred and Pale-crested woodpeckers, and the morning sun illuminating the vivid greens of Nanday Parakeets.

Flowering plants attract shimmering Swallow-tailed and Gilded hummingbirds and sometimes even the extremely localized Buff-bellied Hermit. Musical songs of Flavescent Warblers and duetting Fawn-breasted Wrens explode from dense thickets, while in comparison, Barred Antshrikes show off their dapper black-and-white barred outfits while singing in plain sight. Active Rufous-tailed Jacamars, Masked Gnatcatchers, Common and Pearly-vented Tody-Flycatchers, Ashy-headed Greenlets, Chivi Vireos and Little Cuckoos glean insects from tree-lined roadsides as noisy Purplish Jays flush in front of us. We will delight in the almost comical appearance of the Gray-crested Cachalote, with its cardinal-like crest and yellow eyes. Bordering the gallery forest is mature open woodland which is home to another set of specialists including the stunning Yellow-collared Macaw and Chapada Flycatcher.



Chestnut-eared Aracari © Andrew Whittaker

The Rivers

A large part of our time in this paradise will be spent working from comfortable boats along the main channel of the Miranda River and the narrower Rio Vermelho tributary. These boat outings allow us to safely cover much more ground than we could on foot, but also to approach birds and other wildlife more closely. Daily activities are organized around an early breakfast, thus enabling us to get out into the field each day when temperatures are still cool. We will be out most of the morning before returning to the lodge for a good lunch and an afternoon break (and perhaps a dip in the pool!). Later in the day, as temperatures begin to fall, we will offer another trip on the river to take advantage of the late-day activity.

Over our four full days here, our exact schedule will remain flexible. This is necessary because one of our most hoped-for experiences will be sighting a Jaguar.

Our base here provides an ideal opportunity to be right in the middle of prime wildlife viewing habitat and, more specifically, right within the intersection of multiple Jaguar home ranges. Our objective will be to see this special animal, South America's greatest predator. To accomplish this goal, we have the help of radio-equipped Jaguar scout boats out working on different parts of the river, and connected by radio with us in

our excursion boats. These scout boats greatly increase the chances of seeing not just one but several Jaguars during our stay, as well as other spectacular wildlife, notably families of boisterous Giant Otters.

Although Jaguars range from northern Mexico (and rarely the extreme southwestern United States) south to northern Argentina, nowhere else are they as readily seen as they are right here in some specific locations in the Pantanal. Furthermore, the local abundance of large prey (primarily Capybaras and Yacaré Caimans) has allowed the Jaguars of this region to grow distinctly larger (50% heavier) than their cousins in Central America and Amazonia. Large males in the Pantanal may reach 350 pounds. To convey how large and impressive a beast this is, that's the same size as a full-grown lioness! Until 2004, Jaguar sightings were a rare event, even in the Pantanal, where densities are perhaps higher than anywhere else. Since 2005, however, the establishment of a few notably-eco-friendly locations in the Pantanal has led to local elimination of hunting pressure. This reduction in hunting coupled with an abundance of easy-to-catch riverbank prey (especially vulnerable now, during the dry season), and regular exposure to unarmed sports fishing boats and birders, resulted in local Jaguars losing much of their fear of humans. In these few special locations in the Pantanal, relaxed, abundant Jaguars became easy to see for professional boat drivers who learn the very specific techniques for spotting the big cats as they lie in the shade in windows in the riverbank forest. It is a life-changing experience to observe and quietly boat parallel to such spectacular predators as they hunt along the riverbank or simply rest in the shade, periodically yawning and displaying their enormous teeth. Accordingly, finding and enjoying Jaguars will be of primary interest.



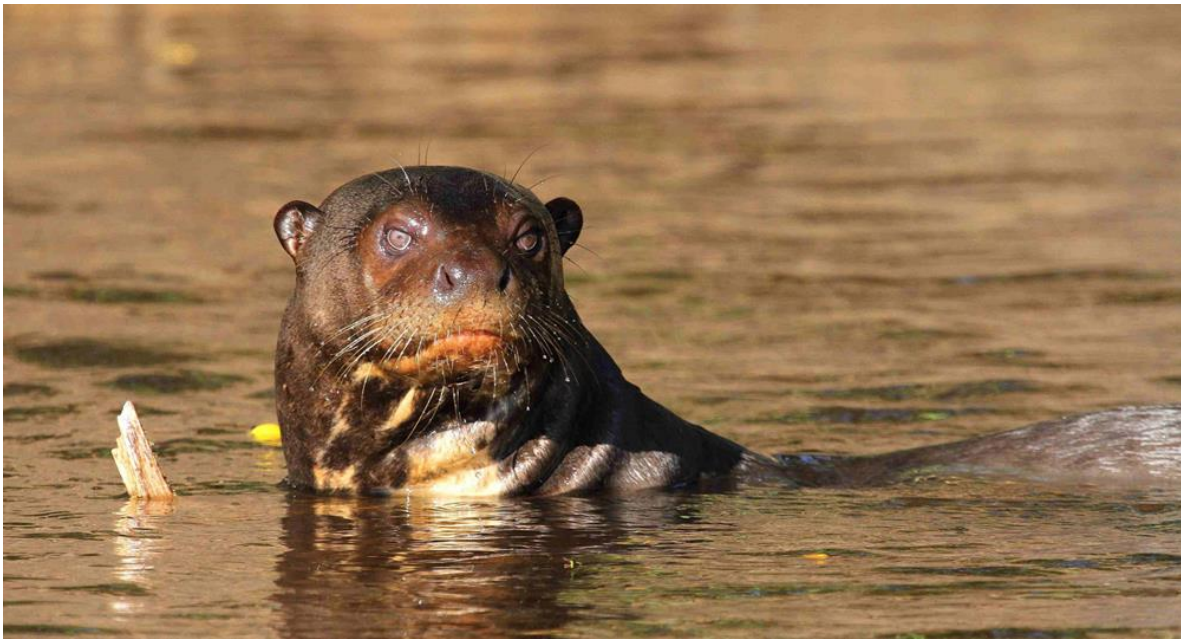
Male Jaguar, Miranda River, Pantanal Jungle Lodge © Andrew Whittaker

Mammals abound here, with another highlight being four resident family groups of 70-pound Giant Otters. Extremely territorial, each group fiercely defends from other groups its own 11-kilometer-long stretch of river channel. The rivers within a 30-minute boat ride of our hotel boast the world's highest concentration of Giant Otters, and the opportunities are unparalleled for viewing and photographing these group-living top carnivores. These delightfully sociable creatures are the world's largest otters, reaching an impressive seven feet long (including their tail) and they face off against and even fight Jaguars. They have a truly

insatiable appetite for fish, with an adult eating an amazing 6-9 pounds a day. Their long whiskers help locate their fish prey through vibrations in these murky waters.

While watching for Jaguars and otters, we have good chances for seeing Black-and-Gold Howler Monkeys, the 600-pound Brazilian Tapir—the largest land mammal in South America—and of course, lots of exciting birds.

Extensive patches of forest along the riverbank offer cover for gems such as Capped Heron, Toco Toucan, colorful Gray-cowled Wood-Rail, Great Antshrike, Rusty-backed and White-lored Spinetail, the amazing Red-billed Scythebill, Pale-legged Hornero, Mato Grosso Antbird, Solitary Black Cacique, and vivid Orange-backed Troupials. We shall quickly become experts in kingfisher identification, with all five South American species occurring here (Ringed, Amazon, Green-and-Rufous, Green, and American Pygmy). One of the largest birds along these rivers is the massive, odd Southern Screamer. Interestingly it's not a fish-eater but instead feeds on plant stems, seeds and leaves. Raptors too are abundant, and we can expect to see Snail Kite, Great Black Hawk, Savanna Hawk, and Roadside Hawk. Observing the handsome fish-eating Black-collared Hawk is always a treat as they swoop down to snatch prey from the river.



Giant Otter, Miranda River, Pantanal Jungle Lodge © Andrew Whittaker

Sandbars along the rivers provide nesting and resting sites not only for Yacaré Caimans but also for Collared Plovers, Black Skimmers, Large-billed Terns and delicate Yellow-billed Terns. The Rio Vermelho is only 45 yards wide, meaning about 50% narrower than the Miranda, which makes it much better for birding, as we are quite close to both banks. Lush riverbank and shallow-water grass and rafts of floating Water Hyacinth vegetation are abundant in insects and offer protection for fish and snails, making this river the ideal habitat for species such as Striated Heron, Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Limpkin, Anhinga, Wood Stork, and Plumbeous and Green ibis. Lesser Yellow-headed Vultures scavenge for dead fish along with the abundant and often confiding “Southern” Crested Caracara. Other species of interest include Golden-green Woodpecker, Rufous-fronted Thornbird, Black-backed Water-Tyrant, White-headed Marsh Tyrant, and the immaculate White Monjita. The unique Black-capped Donacobius will entertain us with their spectacular duet displays and golden skin patches on the sides of their necks.



Green Ibis, Miranda River, Pantanal Jungle Lodge © Andrew Whittaker

If the nights are not too warm, we may offer a boat trip in which we’ll spotlight for frog-eating Boat-billed Herons and Crab-eating Foxes among other possibilities. Along the river banks and in the floating vegetation, we will observe a

myriad of sparkling reflections in our strong spotlight beam, namely the eyes of large numbers of hunting caimans. One of our main avian targets will be two wonderful Neotropical night birds, the Great and Common potoos. These amazingly well-camouflaged birds are often found perched on dead snags on the river edge, and hopefully we will be able to approach them closely for excellent views. Great Horned Owl; Ladder-tailed, Scissor-tailed, and Little nightjars; and Common Pauraque are also possible on this excursion.

NIGHTS: Pantanal Jungle Lodge, Passo do Lontra

August 24, Day 9: Transfer to Bonito; Afternoon Excursion for Giant Anteaters. This morning, we can be somewhat flexible with our timing. Some may enjoy an optional pre-breakfast birding walk around the lodge or we may simply opt for more relaxed fun at the bird feeders. Even a final, quick boat trip is not out of the question. After breakfast, we will say goodbye to this wildlife paradise. However, no need to fret as we are on our way to another magical destination. We will make a four-hour drive southeast to the charming town of Bonito. En route we will travel through miles of countryside and rural areas before climbing slightly in elevation adjacent to the lovely Serra do Bodoquena (Bodoquena Mountain Range). From the vehicle we will keep our eyes open for Long-winged Harrier, our first Red-legged Seriemas, or flocks of huge Greater Rheas, the New World’s largest bird.

Our destination is Bonito, which translates as “beautiful” in both Portuguese and Spanish. It’s unclear who gave this poetic name to this higher region, but it may have been the indigenous Kadiwéu people, who even now own 800,000 acres of land just west of the town. An indigenous legend here says that God created the

world and promised that he would return the next day to deliver tools to the people. The only ethnic group that did not wait for the utensils were the Kadiwéu Indians, and therefore, as a reward for their industry, with a strong breath, the creator granted them a vastness of spectacularly beautiful and rich land where they would live well.

We will arrive at our delightful lodgings at Pousada Olho D'Água in time for a buffet lunch. We will enjoy a tasty cuisine that includes famous local preparations of the foot-long, disk-like, freshwater fish called "Pacu." If you prefer, you also can tuck into a wonderful Brazilian steak or enjoy creative and tasty vegan dishes. Dr. Charles Munn, the CEO of our ground operator company in Brazil, eats vegan as often as possible, and highly recommends the local fare.

Located on the edge of town, the lodge is set amid lovely forested grounds with an abundance of large trees, several of which are festooned with orchids. Comfortable accommodations, an attractive swimming pool, and active bird feeders add to the charm of this idyllic spot. It is an ideal base where we can relax while enjoying explorations of the surrounding area over the next two days.

As you might imagine, the Bonito area and lodge grounds hold an exciting suite of birds new to us. Regular attendees at the bird feeders include Toco Toucan, Canary-winged Parakeet, Pale-breasted Thrush, Chopi Blackbird, Palm and Sayaca tanagers, Red-rumped Caciques, and striking Plush-crested Jays.



Greater Rhea, Southern Pantanal © Andrew Whittaker

Abundant fruiting trees attract frugivores such as guans, parrots, toucans, and tanagers. The large trees on the lodge grounds are especially good for woodpeckers, with resident Crimson-crested, Little, and Pale-crested of note. Some older palms have breeding pairs of Turquoise-fronted Parrots. The grounds also are home to resident Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls and Common Potoos.



Plush-crested Jay, Pousada Olho D'Água © Andrew Whittaker



Toco Toucans, Southern Pantanal © Andrew Whittaker

In the late afternoon, we will drive just outside of town to visit a private reserve with rolling grasslands and gallery forest that borders a stream. This is the ideal mix of habitat to search for one of our prime mammal targets: the Giant Anteater.

Giant Anteaters are surprisingly large, reaching lengths of 6-8 feet from tip of nose to tip of the long, bushy tail. This spectacular insectivore feeds almost exclusively on ants and termites and has no teeth. Using its sharp, four-inch-long claws, these anteaters tear open the rock-hard mounds of termites and ants and then put to work their two-foot-long tongue, covered with very sticky saliva. Each Giant Anteater laps up 35,000 ants and termites per day! Truly a turbo-boosted tongue indeed. When feeding, it's able to flick the tongue in and out an astonishing 150 times per minute! Normally these docile creatures live alone, except for the mothers, who take care of their single young, carrying them on their backs while the young rides like a jockey, achieving a perfect mimicry and camouflage among her dorsal patterns. Late afternoon is the optimum time to search for these amazing creatures, and we should have an exceptionally good chance to observe and enjoy these fascinating animals.

These rolling pastures and grasslands are excellent, too, for the Red-legged Seriema, which issues a sensational, far-carrying duet of raucous, yelping honks. It feeds mostly on arthropods, but also on some lizards and snakes as it roams the grasslands, not unlike the unique Secretarybird of the African savannas. Other species sharing the open country are Greater Rhea, Southern Lapwing, Burrowing Owl, Campo Flicker, Gray and White-rumped monjitas, and Fork-tailed Flycatcher. The plaintive calls of Red-winged Tinamous are common at dusk.



Mother and baby Giant Anteater, Bonito © Andrew Whittaker

NIGHT: Pousada Olho D'Água, Bonito

August 25 Day 10: Buraco das Araras and Nearby Gallery Forest Reserve; Afternoon in the Cerrado.

After breakfast this morning, we will drive one hour to the incredible Buraco das Araras, best translated as “Canyon of the Macaws.” This geological oddity is in a private reserve and is ringed by dry forest that is home to much wildlife.

The circular canyon is a sandstone formation called a “doline” created by the collapse of the land that existed over a cavern, about 200,000 years ago. With a diameter of more than 500 feet and a depth of over 400 feet, this particular doline is one of the world’s largest. Our experience will begin with a walk over a winding flat trail of a few hundred yards through cerrado, where we will keep our eyes open for foraging Six-banded Armadillos that often appear colored red-orange due to burrowing in the soil of that color. We will arrive at a large, double-deck viewing platform on the east side of the canyon. The pleasant songs of Narrow-billed Woodcreeper and Small-billed Tinamou ring out of the dry woodland while honking Buff-cked Ibis depart their nests on the rock walls of the canyon.



Buraco das Araras, Bonito



Red-and-green Macaw, Buraco das Araras © Andrew Whittaker

Despite the geologic wonder before us, the primary draw for many—and the reason we are here—is to witness spectacularly close fly-bys of flocks of Red-and-green Macaws. These extraordinary parrots nest in the walls of the canyon and present a breathtaking carnival of color, contrasting especially against the red sandstone walls and forest greenery. Besides seeing birds in flight, we should also be treated to the sight of birds perched at close range around us. Budding photographers will most certainly be clicking away or taking video and be rewarded with glorious images to take home, treasure and frame.

Scanning the pool at the bottom of the canyon could reward us with a surprise: views of the endangered Broad-nosed Caiman that got washed in here during some past flooding event. Other species to look for here are the sleek Bat Falcon and the resident pair of Aplomado Falcons.

Following what should be an unforgettable visit, we'll then drive a short distance to a private reserve of gallery forest with a secluded, crystal-clear river. Here, we will explore shaded paths running through the forest and more open forest edge for a wealth of interesting species. If some seasonal pools still hold water, which is likely, we might be rewarded with views of White-faced Whistling Duck, Bare-faced Ibis, Whistling Heron, and flocks of Black-necked "White-backed" Stilts.

This forested area acts as a magnet for a marvelous variety of parrot species, one of which is the very localized and endemic Blaze-winged Parakeet. Small flocks of these colorful, long-tailed forest denizens are a common sight here, thankfully. They are named for their blazing orange-and-yellow wing flashes, which can be seen only in flight. Hollow-pitched Amazonian Motmots call from the undergrowth while strident calls of Sibilant Sirystes, the canopy bird flock leader here, can be heard from a distance. The forest understory holds gems such as Southern Antpipit, whose presence often is given away by its odd mandible-clapping sound or by its delightful song. Other species we could encounter here include soaring King Vultures, elegant Swallow-tailed Kites, Blue Ground-Dove, Green-backed Trogon, Scaly-headed Parrot, Chestnut-eared Aracari, Glittering-bellied Emerald, Rufous Casiornis, Helmeted Manakin, Violaceous and Purple-throated euphonias, and Swallow Tanager.



Helmeted Manakin; Balneario Municipal, Jardim © Andrew Whittaker

We will return to the lodge for lunch and a well-earned siesta.

For those who wish, in the afternoon we will offer either a short drive to explore a new area for specialists of the cerrado or walk across the road from the hotel for some local birding on foot. Others may simply choose to relax around the lodge. Our exact plans will remain flexible. The road across from the hotel leads through a mix of pastures, open cerrado, and semi-deciduous forest. This area will offer another opportunity to locate and observe Giant Anteaters. Birdwise, we should enjoy communal groups of dapper White Woodpeckers.



White Woodpeckers, Pousada Olho D'Agua © Andrew Whittaker

The fascinating cerrado around Bonito includes unique tree species that have evolved with twisted trunks covered by a thick bark (almost cork-like), and broad and rigid leaves to minimize transpiration. Many of these plants have extensive root systems to store water and nutrients. The plants' thick bark and roots serve as adaptations for the periodic fires that sweep the cerrado landscape. These adaptations protect the plants from destruction and make them capable of sprouting rapidly again after any fire.

Another cerrado specialty bird here is the endangered Yellow-faced Parrot, which occasionally can also be seen in the taller trees of our hotel grounds, as they love mangos. Mature cerrado is ideal habitat for the lovely Spot-backed (Chaco) Puffbird. Other neat species in this mosaic of habitats may include White-tailed and Short-tailed hawks, Smooth-billed Ani, comical groups of Guira Cuckoo, Picuí Ground-Dove, Campo Flicker, Fawn-breasted and Orange-headed tanagers, Black-faced and Bluish-Gray saltators, Pileated Finch, Wedge-tailed Grassfinch, Grassland Sparrow, White-browed Meadowlark, and White-rumped Monjita.

NIGHT: Pousada Olho D'Agua

August 26, Day 11: Snorkeling (optional) and Birding at Rio da Prata. Our day will begin with a morning of snorkeling (optional) and birding at the Recanto Ecológico Rio da Prata, one of Brazil's many ecological wonders.

After breakfast we'll we make the one-hour drive to the private reserve Recanto Ecológico Rio da Prata. These words translate literally to "Silver River Ecological Reserve." Our activities at the reserve will include opportunities for birding, certainly, but we'll also offer a chance to partake in a very different kind of activity: the opportunity to snorkel in crystalline springs among beautiful tropical fish. This activity will be strictly optional and will be for those who wish to add further diversity to their Pantanal experience.

The spring is a 250-foot-wide natural pool of crystal-clear water that serves as one of the sources of the Silver River. It is essentially a natural aquarium teeming with a remarkable assortment of native fish. Upon arrival, participants will be provided appropriate equipment including short-legged, long-sleeved wetsuit, lightweight neoprene booties, snorkel and mask. We will be accompanied by experienced local guides as well as by our own expedition guides, who will help us into our wetsuits and provide a rundown of procedures. After a five-minute truck ride and a 10-minute walk through the shaded forest, we'll reach the Rio Olho D'Água, a pristine iridescent spring simply brimming with aquatic life.

The springs here are formed from the upwelling of water through thousands of feet of limestone formations. The limestone and the white sand river bottom combine to act as Mother Nature's most efficient filter, thus the crystal-clear nature of the water. It is this combination of white sand river bottom, aquamarine skies overhead, and verdant green foliage around us that creates the illusion of an incredible aquamarine river.

This is how one of our colleagues at Victor Emanuel Nature Tours described his experience here: "A bright silvery-blue fish the length of my forearm rests just beyond my reach. As the current carries me gently along, more fish swim past; large schools of flashy, orange-tailed Piraputangas, sleek silver fish, and just now a dazzling gold and black freshwater Dorado—"King of the River." I've snorkeled in lots of places, but never in a river and never in water this crystal-clear."

It is also worth pointing out that this reserve is a renowned eco-tourism operation, one that has received many awards for its efforts in sustainable tourism.



Snorkeling at Recanto Ecologico Rio da Prata © Andrew Whittaker

For those who choose not to snorkel, and would prefer an enjoyable easy morning of birding, the grounds of the reserve offer trails through riverine forest where we'll encounter a variety of birds. Right around the headquarters, we could be treated to the sight of Red-legged Seriemas walking around the parking area. This area is also excellent for the large Great Rufous Woodcreeper. Noisy flocks of parrots and macaws are a constant, and brilliant Fork-tailed Woodnymphs often feed on flowers on the grounds.

We will have lunch outdoors at the reserve's restaurant. Afterward, we may return to the forest reserve from the previous morning for another round of birding there, or simply return to the lodge for a siesta or enjoy a dip in the swimming pool. We will likely spend the last part of the afternoon birding the lodge grounds. For anyone interested, in the mid-afternoon we will offer an optional visit to the main street in the town of Bonito for a short shopping excursion.

Hopefully, on this, our last night together, we'll be treated to a lovely sunset, to be celebrated by toasting with some excellent Brazilian and Chilean wines.

We will enjoy our final dinner together at the lodge.

NIGHT: Pousada Olho D'Agua

August 27-28, Days 12-13: Flight to Sao Paulo and Departure for Home. Depending on actual flight schedules, we will transfer to either Bonito Airport (airport code BYO) or Campo Grande (CGR).

If we travel through Bonito, we will be transferred there in time for an afternoon flight to São Paulo's Viracopos airport (airport code VCP), gather our luggage and transfer by bus to São Paulo's Guarulhos International Airport (airport code GRU) in time to check in for various overnight flights to the United States, which will arrive on the morning of August 28.

If we travel through Campo Grande, we will be transferred there in time to catch an afternoon flight to São Paulo's Guarulhos International Airport which connect with various overnight flights to the United States, which will arrive on the morning of August 28.

TOUR SIZE: This tour will be limited to 12 participants. However, VENT reserves the right to increase the tour limit by one in order to accommodate a couple when only one space is available.

TOUR LEADERS: Steve Hilty with the assistance of a local leader.



Steve Hilty is the senior author of *A Guide to the Birds of Colombia*, and author of *Birds of Venezuela*, both by Princeton University Press, as well as the popular *Birds of Tropical America*, *A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity*. He has also written a number of scientific papers on birds and plants, has described two species of birds new to science in Venezuela, and another, with a team of scientists, in Colombia. He also wrote the text and species accounts for the tanager family for the acclaimed *Handbook of Birds of the World*, published by Lynx Press in Barcelona. In a departure from ornithology, Steve also wrote *Dirt, Sweat, and Diesel: A Family Farm in the 21st Century*, a book focusing on a Midwestern farm family. However, he returned to birds with his recent (2021) *Birds of Colombia*, published by Lynx Editions of Barcelona, Spain. Steve holds a Ph.D. in zoology from

the University of Arizona and has worked at the Arid Lands Department at the University of Arizona, and as a broker with Merrill Lynch. He is currently a research associate in ornithology at the University of Kansas Biodiversity Institute. Since 1983 he has also worked for Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, guiding trips throughout North and South America, and co-leading trips to India, the Orient, and Australasian regions. With more than four decades of experience in South America and a wide range of natural history interests, he brings a unique breadth of expertise to his Neotropical tours. At night he often turns his binoculars towards the skies for stargazing. Steve lives in Kansas City with his wife, Beverly. They have two daughters.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS: The fee for Brazil: Southern Pantanal Birding & Wildlife Spectacular is **\$10,495** per person in double occupancy. This includes all food from dinner on Day 2 to lunch on Day 12, all lodging during the tour, ground and water transportation during the tour, and guide services provided by the tour leaders. It does not include airfare from your home to Campo Grande and return from Bonito or Campo Grande, airport departure taxes, alcoholic beverages, special gratuities, phone calls, laundry, or items of a personal nature. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may be charged.

The single supplement for Brazil: Southern Pantanal Birding & Wildlife Spectacular is **\$1,010**. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

REGISTRATION & DEPOSIT: To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The initial deposit for this tour is **\$1,000** per person. A second deposit of **\$3,000** is due 210 days prior to departure (January 18, 2025). If you prefer to pay your deposits using a credit card, the deposits must be made with MasterCard

or Visa at the time of registration. If you would like to pay your initial deposit by check, money order, or bank transfer, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. The VENT registration form (available from the VENT office or by download at <https://ventbird.com>) should be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office.

PAYMENTS: All tour payments may be made by credit card (MasterCard or Visa), check, money order, or bank transfer (contact the VENT office for bank transfer information). These include initial deposits, second deposits, interim payments, final balances, special arrangements, etc. Full payment of the tour fee is due 150 days prior to the tour departure date (March 19, 2025.)

MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE REQUIREMENT: This tour visits remote locations where immediate access to primary medical care may **NOT** be available. **For this reason, travel insurance which covers you for emergency evacuation is required for participation on this tour.** This coverage is included in the **Ripcord Rescue Travel Insurance™** program. Through Ripcord, “emergency evacuation” can be purchased as a stand-alone benefit or as part of a comprehensive travel insurance policy. If you choose not to purchase insurance through Ripcord, you are required to obtain it through another provider.

CANCELLATION & REFUNDS:

Cancellation by Participant:

Refunds, if any, for any cancellation by a participant are made according to the following schedule: If participant cancels 210 days or more before the tour departure date, a cancellation fee of **\$500** per person will be charged unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months, in which case the cancellation fee will be **\$100** per person. If cancellation is made between 209 and 151 days before departure date, the deposit is not refundable, but any payments covering the balance of the tour fee will be refunded. If cancellation is made fewer than 150 days before departure date, no refund is available. **For participants’ protection, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance that covers trip cancellation/interruption.**

<u>If participant cancels:</u>	<u>Participant’s refund will be:</u>
210 days or more before departure date	Your deposit(s) minus \$500*
209 to 151 days before departure date	No refund of the deposits, but any payments on the balance will be refunded
150 days or less before departure date	No refund available

*Unless the deposit is transferred to a new registration for another VENT tour that will operate within the next 12 months from the date of participant tour cancellation, in which case the cancellation fee will be \$100 per person. To qualify, cancellation must occur 180 days or more before departure date; deposit transfers must be made at the time of cancellation; and one transfer per deposit.

Cancellation by VENT:

If VENT cancels a tour prior to departure without cause or good reason, VENT will provide the participant a full refund, which will constitute full settlement to the participant.

If VENT cancels or delays a tour or any portion of a tour as a result of any Force Majeure event, VENT will use its reasonable best efforts to refund any payments on the balance of the tour fee to participant; provided that, VENT will have no obligation to provide a participant with a refund and will not be liable or responsible to a participant, nor be deemed to have defaulted under or breached any applicable agreement, for any failure or delay in fulfilling or performing any term of such agreement. A “**Force Majeure**” event means any act beyond VENT’s control, including, without limitation, the following: (a) acts

of God; (b) flood, fire, earthquake, hurricane, epidemic, pandemic or explosion; (c) war, invasion, hostilities (whether war is declared or not), terrorist threats or acts, riot or other civil unrest; (d) government order, law or actions; (e) embargoes or blockades; (f) national or regional emergency; (g) strikes, labor stoppages, labor slowdowns or other industrial disturbances; (h) shortage of adequate power or transportation facilities; and (i) any other similar events or circumstances beyond the control of VENT.

This VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy does not apply to air tickets purchased through VENT or to any special arrangements, such as additional hotel nights, that fall outside of the services described in the tour itinerary.

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: To safeguard against losses due to illness, accident, or other unforeseen circumstances, we strongly recommend the purchase of travel insurance as soon as possible after making a deposit. VENT has partnered with Redpoint Travel Protection as our preferred travel insurance provider. Through Redpoint, we recommend its **Ripcord** plan. Designed for all types of travelers, Ripcord is among the most comprehensive travel protection programs available.

Critical benefits of Ripcord include a completely integrated program with a single contact for emergency services, travel assistance, and insurance claims; **medical evacuation from your point of injury or illness to your hospital of choice**; comprehensive travel insurance for trip cancellation/interruption, medical expense coverage, death of pet, and much more. Optional expanded insurance coverage is available and includes items such as evacuation coverage in case of a natural disaster or political or security reasons, waiver for pre-existing medical conditions exclusion, and a “Cancel for Any Reason” benefit. Ripcord is available to U.S. and non-U.S. residents.*

For a price quote, or to purchase travel insurance, please visit:

<https://ripcordtravelprotection.com/ventbird>; or click the **Ripcord** logo on our website (click Help and Trip Insurance); or call +1-415-481-0600. Pricing is based on age, trip cost, trip length, and level of coverage.

*To be eligible for the pre-existing medical condition exclusion waiver and the optional Cancel for Any Reason (CFAR) upgrade, you must purchase your policy within 15 days of making your first trip payment. The CFAR benefit provides reimbursement for 75% of covered costs, and increases the policy premium by approximately 50%. Policies may be purchased either for the full value of the tour fee at the time of deposit or in segments as individual tour payments are made (deposit, mid-payment, final balance, additional arrangements, etc.). The “pay as you go” approach reduces up-front expense and ensures that the amount paid toward your full policy premium is in proportion to the amount paid toward the full tour fee. If you choose to “pay as you go,” you must cover each deposit or payment within 15 days, and insure all non-refundable trip cost in order to maintain the CFAR benefit. Please refer to the policy for a full description of coverage.

Coronavirus (COVID-19):

In line with the decision made by the federal government (including the CDC), Redpoint considers COVID-19 illness as any other seasonal respiratory illness. Providing only a positive Covid-19 test result will likely not be considered a covered event per the terms and conditions of the company's policy. Redpoint

maintains a **Coronavirus FAQ** page on its website that addresses questions and concerns travelers may have regarding COVID-19 and Redpoint's policy. We strongly recommend that you visit the page for an overview of relevant topics.

Please visit the **Coronavirus FAQ** page at the following link:

https://redpointtravelprotection.com/covid_19_faq/

EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES: In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES: In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this departure. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of itinerary publication. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

AIR INFORMATION: Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT). Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to make any domestic or international air travel arrangements from your home and return. Per person fees apply for each set of travel arrangements: \$50 domestic; \$75 international.* Many of our travelers choose to make their own air travel arrangements, but we emphasize the benefits to using our services. If you book your air arrangements yourself, Victor Emanuel Travel is unable to provide support in managing any flight delays and/or cancellations that could occur before and during a tour. When you purchase air tickets through Victor Emanuel Travel, our staff has ready access to your air ticket record and can provide assistance as problems arise. Please feel free to call the VENT office to confirm your air arrangements. **Please be sure to check with the VENT office prior to purchasing your air ticket to confirm that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. VENT cannot be held responsible for any air ticket penalties.**

Please note that most fares for intra-Brazil flights do not include fees for checked luggage. Expect these to be collected during online or airport check-in.

*An air ticket will be purchased by Victor Emanuel Travel on behalf of the traveler with the traveler's consent. A purchase is considered final upon receipt of payment. If a ticket is subsequently reissued at the behest of the traveler (i.e. voluntary change of plans), the same fee rates apply for the reissue process, in addition to any fees that may be charged by the airline.

BAGGAGE: Please limit baggage to one piece of luggage, one regulation-size carry-on bag, and a small "personal item" carry-on, as space for luggage could be limited. The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant.

As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, toiletries, medications, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag. Due to ever-changing circumstances in the government's attempts to improve airport security, we recommend that

you check the website of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for information pertaining to permissible carry-on items:

<http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

CLOTHING: Our time in Brazil will be characterized by warm to hot conditions. Lightweight field clothing, including several pairs of pants and shorts and comfortable shirts (long-sleeved and short-sleeved), will be appropriate. Dark or neutral-colored clothing is requested, as white and other bright colors may frighten secretive birds. Many people prefer field-type clothing, sold by outdoor stores such as Cabela's and REI, that include pants and shirts made of lightweight yet durable materials with multiple pockets and ventilated seams. Denim is acceptable, but is not as comfortable as other lightweight materials. One set of warm clothing should be included in case of a cold front (*fria*) from the south. These fronts can bring cooler temperatures, overcast skies, and rain (although rain is highly unlikely). In such conditions, a lightweight, water-repellent jacket will be useful. Your jacket and/or a fleece could prove handy on morning boat trips and around Bonito, which is at a little higher elevation. A hat for protection from the sun is equally essential. A wide-brimmed hat is best, but participants should bring a baseball cap at the very least. Overall, the best type of hat would be a sun hat with a stiff brim and chin strap. This style of hat will prove especially useful when aboard the boats on the river as it will be less inclined to blow off. Please bring a swimsuit if you like to swim, as the lodges do have pools. Dress will be casual throughout.

FOOTWEAR: For footwear we recommend a good trail-walking shoe or light hiking boot when in the field, and a second pair to change into. Athletic shoes are acceptable but will not keep your feet dry and can become soiled from muddy conditions. Sandals or other open-toed shoes are appropriate around the lodges.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service may should not be expected during the trip; the one exception is the Pantanal Jungle Lodge where laundry service may be available for an extra charge. Participants should bring enough clothing to get through the trip without needing laundry service.

EQUIPMENT: One of the most important aspects of having an enjoyable travel experience is being prepared with proper equipment. The following items will come in handy during your trip to Brazil:

- Daypack – Good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment
- Notebooks and pens
- Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection
- Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions
- Personal toiletries
- Collapsible walking stick – A highly recommended item for those who have trouble walking
- Tissue packs
- Flashlight or headlamp
- Water bottle
- Plug adapters: Many electrical outlets in Brazilian hotels and lodges require a different plug type than the standard outlets in the United States. Therefore, a set of plug adaptors (available at a wide range of stores, including most airport terminal gift shops that sell travel accessories) is recommended for participants wishing to charge camera batteries or other appliances. For more information, please see the ELECTRICITY section below.

BINOCULARS & SPOTTING SCOPES:

Binoculars – We strongly recommend good binoculars of at least 8x32, 8x42, or 10x42 magnification. We recommend that you do NOT bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. Trying to find a bird in your binocular using minis is like trying to read a book through a keyhole. You will be very frustrated, and even if you do manage to get the bird in your binocular before it flies, you will have a poor view. You will find that 8x32 or 8x42 binoculars are compact and light enough.

Spotting Scopes – Your tour leaders will have their scopes available for group use throughout the trip, but if you have one and wish to bring it, please feel free to do so.

CLIMATE & WEATHER: August is a dry-season month in central and western Brazil, which means the days can be hot and dry with limited likelihood of rain. In the Pantanal, the days will typically start with mild-to-warm mornings before the temperatures rise to the mid-to-upper 90s (°F) during the heat of the day. Even temperatures of 100+ are possible. The good news is that humidity is low, making hot temperatures surprisingly tolerable. In the Bonito area, which is at a little higher elevation than the Pantanal, conditions will be similar but with the temperatures about 3-5 degrees cooler.

As August is a late winter month in the southern hemisphere, we should come prepared for the possibility of a cool front penetrating from further south, in which case we may experience steady overcast skies and temperatures as low as 55 °F.

CONDITIONS: Your trip to Brazil will be an exciting and full travel experience in which wildlife viewing is paramount. Our time in the field will be spent seeking a number of the region's signature birds, mammals, and other wildlife, in addition to learning about the region's complex ecology.

Most nature trips to the Pantanal visit the area south of the Amazon region and north of the Cuiaba River, in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso. This area is informally known as the northern Pantanal. Our trip will visit the southern Pantanal, in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul. Although not as well-known for wildlife viewing as the northern Pantanal, the south is of equal appeal. While the north is known for its relatively large Jaguar population, the south also has Jaguars, and in addition, offers better Giant Anteater experiences, which is important for many visitors here. The south also provides a more varied experience in terms of habitats and landscapes in that our trip includes the cerrado region around Bonito. The sinkhole experience and the macaws that nest there are another trip bonus.

Our days will typically begin with breakfast followed by a full morning in the field. After lunch we will break during the heat of the day before going out again later in the afternoon. Optional early morning/pre-breakfast bird walks or excursions may be offered on several occasions.

Travel will be aboard vehicles ranging from closed air-conditioned buses with onboard bathroom to vans.

In the Pantanal, we will walk trails in the dry forest and take several boat trips on the Miranda and Vermelho Rivers. All walking will be easy and on flat and well-maintained trails. Our days will be spent cruising portions of the main river channel and the smaller Rio Vermelho tributary in search of wildlife, especially Jaguars and Giant Otters. We will travel aboard a stable and comfortable motorboat designed to enter areas of shallow water. With a full group, we may utilize three boats.

The boats will not have canopies, in order to preserve optimal viewing conditions, but each boat will be equipped with “ice vests” to keep everyone cool. An ice vest is a cooling vest developed by Dr. Charles Munn that contains pockets into which bags filled with 800 grams of ice cubes or chips are inserted. An ice vest provides cooling capability up to 45 minutes and can be replenished as often as needed. It is important that guests bring a sun hat, preferably one with a stiff brim and chin strap.

Accommodations in all locations are air-conditioned and contain en suite, hot-shower bathrooms. The Hotel Deville in Campo Grande is very comfortable, perhaps somewhat luxurious by relative standards. The Pantanal Jungle Lodge is not fancy. In some ways it is fairly basic; however, it is an outstanding choice based on its superior location on the Miranda River and access to exceptional birding and wildlife viewing. The Pousada Olho D’Agua is of standard quality accommodations, which means it is in between the level of the Pantanal Jungle Lodge and the Hotel Deville.



Pantanal Jungle Lodge © Dr. Charles Munn



Pantanal Jungle Lodge © Dr. Charles Munn

Brazilian cuisine is high in quality. Given our location, we should expect delicious fresh-cooked fish on a regular basis, in addition to an array of chicken and beef dishes. Good vegetarian and vegan options will be available.

Overall, physical demands will be light, but please bear in mind that some of our excursions may involve a moderate amount of walking and standing. We emphasize that no one will be subjected to physical demands that exceed their capabilities. All walking will be done at a slow pace. Almost all activities will be optional.

The snorkeling in Bonito is very relaxed and easy in shallow, slow-flowing, crystalline water with instructors and guides. The wet suits provided keep you warm and allow you to float without any effort. If you require a flotation jacket, these are available. Snorkels are used and are cleaned and sanitized with alcohol after the last use.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS: Beginning with arrivals on April 10, 2025, in addition to a passport valid for the duration of your planned visit, an electronic visa will be required for U.S. and Canadian citizens to enter Brazil. Information on how to apply can found on the following website: <https://brazil.vfsevisa.com/>

Non-U.S. and Canadian citizens should check with their local Brazilian consulate or embassy for instructions.

Please check the expiration date on your passport. If it is not valid over the duration of your visit, you will need to get it renewed. You will also want to make sure that you have at least two blank pages in your passport for stamps.

If you need a passport, you should get it well in advance of your trip departure date. For additional fees, a passport can be issued on an expedited basis. In the United States this can be done at the nearest passport office, most post offices, or the county clerk's office. You may also visit www.state.gov/travel/ for information on how to get or renew a passport.

As a safety measure, photocopy the first two pages of your passport. Keep the photocopies in a safe place, so if your passport is lost you will have proof of identification. Your passport should be signed and easily available at all times. You will need it for check-in at the airport on your first day of departure, so do not pack it in your checked luggage.

CURRENCY & MONEY MATTERS: Brazilian Real. MasterCard and Visa are more widely accepted than American Express, but all are useful, particularly in major population centers. Sometimes the credit card machines malfunction, and for that reason you should consider having some cash with you. You will want to bring enough cash to cover personal expenses not included in the program (and that might not be payable with credit card), such as gifts, laundry, gratuities, meals on your own, and personal items. Some places are reluctant to accept U.S. dollars, so it might be a good idea to exchange some dollars for Brazilian Reals before leaving home or at the arrival airport in Brazil.

ELECTRICITY: The electrical current in Brazil ranges from 110V to 220V, depending on the region of the country. Electrical outlets are one of four standard socket types: "A," "B," "C," and "N." The "A" and "C" types are similar; both are ungrounded and receive two-pronged plugs. The "A" plug is outfitted with two parallel blades, and the "C" plug is equipped with pins instead of blades. Many outlets in Brazil are a hybrid between the two types and accept either plug. The "B" type socket is the American 3-prong style and is

less common. The “N” plug is something like the “C” plug but with a third pin added as a ground. Although each lodge can probably provide guests with plug adapters to accommodate American-style plugs, to be safe, you should bring a set of plug adaptors (available at a wide range of stores, including most airport terminal gift shops that sell travel accessories). An electrical current converter may be required as well. Please check the adaptability of your electronics and electrical appliances to verify your needs.

INTERNET ACCESS: Expect Wi-Fi to be available at all lodges and hotels. It generally works well in Campo Grande. In the Pantanal and at Bonito it can be a little slow and erratic during heavy rain or high wind.

TIME ZONE: The Pantanal region of Brazil is on Amazon Time (AMT) and is on the same time zone as Eastern Daylight Time (EDT).

HEALTH: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination against a variety of preventable diseases, including the so-called Routine Vaccinations (if you are not up-to-date), which are measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine; diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine; and poliovirus vaccine (boosters for adult travelers who have received a primary series with either inactivated poliovirus vaccine (IPV) or oral polio vaccine (OPV); they should receive another dose of IPV before departure). You should also be up-to-date with your hepatitis A and hepatitis B vaccinations.

Yellow Fever and Malaria – Vaccination against Yellow Fever is highly recommended for most individuals. Some individuals may have medical conditions for which vaccination is contraindicated. Malaria has been confirmed in Brazil, including the chloroquine-resistant strain, but is highly unlikely on this tour. Just for reference, our ground operators have been going to the South Pantanal and Bonito areas annually for weeks or months since 1987, and they have never heard of a single case of malaria occurring in the entire state of Mato Grosso do Sul. We suggest that participants consult their physician as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for current recommendations before beginning a prophylaxis regimen.

Insect protection – Your safety is our highest priority, and we want to emphasize that the best way to avoid mosquito-borne diseases is to take appropriate precautions in avoiding mosquito bites:

- Stay informed about these diseases and recent outbreaks
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants, socks and shoes, and a hat*
- Use effective insect repellents (those containing DEET) and reapply regularly. We suggest bringing two squeeze bottles of Cutter or OFF!

*We strongly recommend the use of Insect Shield® clothing. Insect Shield is a process by which clothing is treated with an EPA-approved formula of the insect repellent permethrin. Such clothing is highly repellent to insects and provides durable and long-lasting protection, even after six washings. Outdoor wear with Insect Shield protection includes name brands such as ExOfficio and Tilley, and can be purchased at outdoor recreation stores such as REI and from a variety of online retailers. In lieu of Insect Shield clothing, you should consider treating your clothes with permethrin, which has the same effect, and that can be purchased at outdoor recreation stores and from a variety of online retailers. Sun Exposure is always a concern.

Sun Exposure – The sun’s ultraviolet rays are dangerous under prolonged exposure (sometimes only a matter of minutes). Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. A severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Please be sure to bring an ample supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the trip safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. The CDC operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) or you can check their website at wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel. Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html> (click on Travel Health).

SUGGESTED READING: A number of traditional booksellers and online stores list excellent inventories of field guides and other natural history resources that will help prepare you for this tour. We recommend www.amazon.com which has a wide selection; www.buteobooks.com and www.nhbs.com which specialize in ornithology and natural history books; and www.abebooks.com for out-of-print and hard-to-find titles.

Birds:

Field Guides:

Gwynne, John A., Robert S. Ridgely, Guy Tudor and Martha Argel. ***Wildlife Conservation Society Birds of Brazil: The Pantanal & Cerrado of Central Brazil***. Ithaca and London: Comstock Publishing Associates, 2010.

This excellent field guide should be considered the primary bird identification reference for the Pantanal and Bonito regions as it covers virtually every species possible on this trip.

Other Birding Resources:

Hilty, Steven. ***Birds of Tropical America: A watcher's introduction to behavior, breeding and diversity***. University of Texas Press, 2005.

This wonderful guide delves into the ecology of tropical birds beyond "What is it?" Written for the lay person, this is a highly "readable" book that avoids overly technical jargon and that does not bog down in heavy science. A valuable resource and an excellent field guide companion.

Butterflies:

D'Abrera, Bernard. ***Butterflies of South America***. Australia: Hill House, 1984. Good pocket guide, covers many
Genera, nice pictures.

Mammals:

Emmons, Louise H. ***Neotropical Rainforest Mammals***. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997. Second edition.

Good pictures and excellent text.

General Nature:

Forsyth, Adrian, Ken Miyata et al. *Tropical Nature*. Scribner, 1987. (Paperback)

Kricher, John. *A Neotropical Companion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Lowen, James. *Pantanal Wildlife: A Visitor's Guide to Brazil's Great Wetland*. Bradt Travel Guides, 2010.

Pierson, David L., and Les Belesky. *The Ecotravellers' Wildlife Guide Brazil Amazon and Pantanal*. Academic Press, 2001.

CLO Apps & Online Resources:

eBird. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Among the largest and most successful citizen science projects in existence, eBird is an essential tool in promoting bird study and conservation. Among a range of benefits, eBird allows users to keep a variety of lists in a single application. When taxonomic splits are incorporated, lists are automatically updated. Additionally, trip leaders can share daily lists, so one only need accept a shared list and it will upload to your files! **Highly recommended.**

Merlin Bird ID. Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Merlin is an app designed as a birding coach for beginning and intermediate bird watchers. Excellent for use in the field, Merlin asks the observer a series of questions regarding his or her bird sighting, including date and location, and color, size, and behavior of a bird. Merlin then processes the viewer's responses to present a shortlist of possible identifications, from which the user can choose the likely bird. Species profiles include a brief physical description, photographs, and sound samples. The Photo ID feature allows anyone with a camera to snap a photo and obtain a list of suggestions. Merlin's Sound ID feature allows identification of birds through audible recognition. To use Merlin, download the app, followed by the appropriate regional "pack." For this trip, please download the pack for **Brazil: Central-West. Highly recommended.**

Birds of the World. "Discover the world of birds" through the Lab's Birds of the World online resource, offering comprehensive life histories for all bird species and families. Visit the [Birds of the World website](#), where for any bird you can learn about its appearance, distribution, diet, behavior, and more. Free samples are available through the home page while subscriptions are available at the monthly, annual, and three-year levels. **Highly recommended.**

RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT: Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc., a Texas corporation, and/or its agents (together, "**VENT**") act only as agents for the participant in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the participant or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT accepts no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in airfare or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, terrorism, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will be borne by the participant, as tour rates only provide for arrangements for the time stated.

VENT reserves the right (i) to substitute hotels of similar category, or the best reasonable substitution available under the circumstances, for those indicated and (ii) to make any changes in the itinerary that are deemed necessary by VENT or which are caused by third party transportation schedules (i.e. railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, etc.).

VENT reserves the right to substitute leaders or guides on any tour. Where VENT, in its sole discretion, determines such substitution is necessary, it will notify tour participants.

VENT reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure with or without cause or good reason. See the VENT Cancellation & Refunds policy set forth above.

Tour prices are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect on a date to be announced and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change thereto.

VENT reserves the right to decline any participant's Registration Form and/or refuse to allow any participant to participate in a tour as VENT deems reasonably necessary, in its sole discretion. VENT also reserves the right to remove any tour participant from any portion of a tour as VENT deems necessary, in its sole discretion, reasons for such removal include but are not limited to, medical needs, injury, illness, inability to meet physical demands of a tour, personality conflict or situations in which such removal is otherwise in the best interest of the tour, the tour group and/or such participant. A participant may also voluntarily depart from a tour. If a participant is removed from a tour or voluntarily departs from a tour, such participant will be responsible for any expenses associated with such removal or departure, including but not limited to, transportation, lodging, airfare and meals, and VENT will have no obligation to refund or reimburse any such removed or departed participant for any tour payments or deposits previously paid by such participant.

Baggage is carried at the participant's risk entirely. No airline company, its employees, agents and/or affiliates (the "**Airline**") is to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time participants are not on board the Airline's aircraft. The participant ticket in use by any Airline, when issued, will constitute the sole contract between the Airline and the purchaser of the tickets and/or the participant. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for VENT tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airlines Reporting Corporation.

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