



INSIDER JOURNEYS

JAGUARS & WILDLIFE OF BRAZIL'S PANTANAL



TRIP ITINERARY

With María José Villanueva,
WWF Jaguar Conservation Initiative Lead

September 8–18, 2023

Situated in the heart of South America, the Pantanal is the world's largest tropical wetland, covering 75,000 square miles, and is one of the most biologically-rich environments on the planet. It is a refuge for iconic wildlife, including the hyacinth macaw, the caiman, and giant river otters—creating an intricate food chain made up of the largest concentration of wildlife in the Americas. At the apex is the elegant and elusive jaguar.

WWF and partners have worked in the Pantanal since 1998, helping to protect this extraordinary ecological system, so humans and nature can continue to thrive. Over the last several years, WWF supported a new transboundary sustainable development and

conservation strategy in partnership with the governments of Bolivia, Brazil, and Paraguay that will protect this globally significant freshwater resource.



Join WWF's María José Villanueva, and local experts on a journey into the heart of our efforts as we visit the regions vital to the

future of the Pantanal. This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity explores firsthand how WWF is working on-the-ground with communities, NGOs, governments, and the private sector to protect the iconic wildlife, habitat, and the people who call this extraordinary region home. On foot, by boat and in 4x4, we will venture into the verdant depths of the Pantanal.

ITINERARY AT A GLANCE 11 Days

Day	Date	Location	Accommodation
1	September 8	Arrive São Paulo, Brazil	Tivoli Mofarrej São Paulo Hotel
2 & 3	September 9 & 10	São Paulo / Cuiabá / North Pantanal	Araras Lodge
4, 5, 6	September 11-13	North Pantanal / Porto Jofre—Jaguar Viewing	Hotel Pantanal Norte
7, 8, 9	September 14-16	Porto Jofre / South Pantanal	Caiman Ecological Refuge
10	September 17	Caiman / Campo Grande / São Paulo	Tivoli Mofarrej São Paulo Hotel
11	September 18	São Paulo / Depart	

ITINERARY IN DETAIL

Day 1, September 8: São Paulo, Brazil

Arrive in São Paulo and transfer to Hotel Unique, our architecturally distinctive hotel in São Paulo's trendy Moema neighborhood. Our Brazil adventure begins with a welcome dinner this evening with a special guest from WWF-Brazil in attendance for welcoming remarks and dinner.

Overnight Tivoli Mofarrej São Paulo Hotel (D)

Day 2, September 9: São Paulo / Cuiabá / North Pantanal

Fly early this morning to Cuiabá, then transfer by road to Araras Ecolodge in the northern sector of the Pantanal. Declared a World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 2000, the Pantanal's vast expanse of wet marshlands and dry islands is South America's primary wildlife sanctuary. Its name derives from the Portuguese word pantano, meaning "swamp."

With rhythmic regularity, this vast depression in the center of South America floods with the annual rains, submerging most of its environs. As the waters recede during the dry season, they leave a mosaic of pools and marshes where a plethora of life flourishes in intense concentration. Some 3,500 different plants thrive here, as well as 10 million caiman, 650 bird species, 400 kinds of fish, myriad reptiles and amphibians, and more than 100 mammal species. Wandering the nature trails around the lodge, we get our first sense of the wondrous natural surroundings that await our exploration.

Overnight Araras Ecolodge (B,L,D)



Day 3, September 10: North Pantanal

Our immersion begins with a morning nature walk with our Expedition Leader and local guides who are experts on the Pantanal's flora and fauna. We'll hope to see some of the region's threatened species including giant armadillo and capybara, plus spectacular birdlife.

This afternoon we explore the Pantanal savannah on safari, then finish our day's adventure with a night drive in hopes of spotting nocturnal wildlife en route to the lodge.

Overnight Araras Ecolodge (B,L,D)

Day 4, September 11: North Pantanal / Porto Jofre—Jaguar Viewing

On a sunrise nature walk from our ecolodge, listen to the chorus of bird songs and monkey calls announcing a new day. After breakfast, depart for Porto Jofre via the Trans-Pantanal Highway, which traverses some of the best wildlife viewing areas in the ecosystem. Along this remote road that crosses 123 bridges, we search for caiman, capybara, giant anteater, anaconda, jabiru stork, macaws and more. We will discuss how WWF supports the Hyacinth Macaw Project to help rebuild the population of these vulnerable birds, which at up to 40 inches from beak to tail, are the world's largest parrot. In the 1990s, loss of habitat and illegal wildlife trafficking almost drove this remarkable cobalt blue species to extinction. Our destination is Porto Jofre, where the highway ends at the Cuiabá River. After lunch, we set out in small boats on our first jaguar watch, scanning the riverbanks for glimpses of the stealthy cats from our open skiff. This region has the highest density of jaguars in the entire Pantanal, and our odds of seeing them are excellent.

Overnight Hotel Pantanal Norte (B,L,D)



Day 5 & 6, September 12–13: Porto Jofre—Jaguar & Wildlife Viewing



The area around Porto Jofre offers exceptional wildlife encounters. Our focus is on sighting jaguars and giant otters, but we also search for a multitude of other Pantanal species, including caiman, capybara, Brazilian tapir, sloth and monkeys, on our private skiff excursions. Outings along the river reveal scores of waterbirds, reptiles, and plant species that bloom in the sprawling collection of lakes, lagoons, rivers and marshes. Fish also flourish in this freshwater sea. As the water level drops seasonally in the lakes and channels, fishermen can

sometimes catch dorado, pacu, and traira by hand. Birds large and small fly overhead and feed at eye level.

Overnight Hotel Pantanal Norte (B,L,D)

Day 7, September 14: Porto Jofre / South Pantanal—Chartered Flight to Caiman Ecological Refuge

This morning we fly via chartered small planes directly to Caiman Ecological Refuge, enjoying splendid aerial views. Deep in the green recesses of the South Pantanal, this renowned ecolodge lies at the heart of a 130,000-acre sustainable cattle ranch. Since 2003, WWF has partnered with the Brazilian Organic Cattle Ranching Association to promote cattle ranching in Brazil and maintain the balance between farming, which is the primary source of income for communities in the region, and the conservation of the Pantanal. The atmosphere here reflects the distinctive local cowboy culture, which taps 200 years of combined Portuguese, Paraguayan and indigenous traditions. The lodge was the first ecotourism operation in the region and remains a conservation leader. When the refuge was established, 10 percent of the ranch acreage was set aside as a private conservation area, off-limits to cattle but open to visitors.



The protected area is remarkably diverse, with habitats encompassing wooded and scrubby savanna, open pasture, stands of caranda palm, hammock forests, streams and seasonal channels—all providing sustenance for numerous Pantanal species, including the rare maned wolf.

Overnight Caiman Ecological Refuge (B,L,D)



Day 8 & 9, September 15 & 16: Exploring the South Pantanal

A range of activities in the refuge offers varied perspectives on the South Pantanal. Depending on seasonal conditions, we may take nature walks and day and night 4x4 safaris in open-sided trucks. Local guides join our Expedition Leader to reveal and interpret the area's many natural phenomena. Wildlife abounds in the vicinity, and the refuge is the site of the Onçafari Jaguar Project. This new conservation initiative aims to promote

wildlife ecotourism in the Pantanal by habituating jaguars to vehicles so people can observe them while on safari. With patience and luck, we hope to be among the fortunate few to see wild jaguars here, as sightings continue to increase with concerted conservation efforts. On clear nights from mid-June to mid-October, the starry skies overhead are spectacular, and we may have the chance to view planets and constellations through powerful telescopes during evening astronomy programs around the campfire.

During our time at Caiman Ecological Refuge, WWF-Brazil's Conservation Officer and Pantanal Project Coordinator will join the group to discuss WWF work in the region. Our local expert will share information on transboundary collaboration between Brazil, Paraguay, and Bolivia; sustainable agriculture in the soy and cattle industries; freshwater initiatives; and forest fire prevention, recovery, and management.



A head researcher from Instituto Arara Azul (ITA) will also join to discuss the WWF-supported Hyacinth Macaw Project. The project studies the biology and ecological relationships of the hyacinth macaw and manages and promotes the conservation of the hyacinth macaw in its natural habitat. The project works onsite at Caiman Ecological Refuge and studies the reproductive biology of scarlet macaws, toucans, hawks, owls, Muscovy ducks, and other species that

live alongside the hyacinth macaw in the Pantanal.

Overnight Caiman Ecological Refuge (B,L,D)

Day 10, October 1: Caiman / Campo Grande / São Paulo

Drive this morning to Campo Grande, the capital and largest city in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso do Sul. Highly multicultural with a distinctive mixed-ethnic heritage, Campo Grande's population includes immigrants and descendants from Japan, the Middle East, Armenia, Portugal, Germany, Italy, Spain and Paraguay who have mixed with indigenous Amerindian peoples and Afro-Brazilians. From here, we depart on an afternoon flight to São Paulo and check in to our hotel. This evening, reflect on all the highlights of our adventure over a farewell dinner.

Overnight Tivoli Mofarrej São Paulo Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 11, October 2: São Paulo/ Depart

A transfer is provided to the airport this morning for departing flights.

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Meet Our Expert



María José Villanueva, WWF Jaguar Conservation Initiative Lead and WWF-Mexico's Conservation Director

For over ten years, María José Villanueva has worked with WWF-Mexico helping to establish a nationwide partnership with over 60 NGOs, Indigenous communities, local and federal governments, and private sector businesses to conserve Mexico's unique biodiversity. She leads the implementation of WWF's regional jaguar strategy, which aims to secure 15 priority landscapes within the continental jaguar corridor that extends from Argentina to the North of Mexico. Jaguars have already lost 50% of their original

territory, through protecting its natural strongholds, empowering the local communities who coexist with them, and influencing policy at all levels we will achieve this goal.

As WWF-Mexico's Conservation Director, she also leads the Ocean, Terrestrial Ecosystem, Climate Change, and Freshwater programs. Prior to WWF, María José earned her PhD in Marine Sciences and Limnology with an emphasis in marine mammals from the Institute of Marine Sciences and Limnology, worked for several conservation organizations in Mexico, and taught biology and conservation courses.

What to Expect and Physical Requirements

While this trip does not require a substantial degree of physical fitness, in order to participate fully in this itinerary, guests should be able to undertake several walks and hikes that are typically two to three miles in length, over mostly flat and dry-but sometimes uneven-terrain. The longest walk is in the Pantanal, three miles over flat terrain. Brazil can be very hot and humid, and guests will often spend several hours at a stretch on walks, drives or boat rides. Sturdy walking shoes with good traction are recommended.



Accommodations



Tivoli Mofarrej São Paulo Hotel

Tivoli Mofarrej is a low-rise urban oasis in the upscale Jardins district of São Paulo, amid leafy, tree-lined streets in the heart of this burgeoning city. Tivoli Mofarrej's optimal location offers unmatched access to the cultural capital of South America. The 23-story tower overlooks the gardens and sculptures of Trianon Park, and a block away is bustling Avenida Paulista, where a short walk leads to the world-renowned Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP). But just as notably, Tivoli Mofarrej is a luxury retreat unto itself. Named one of the "Top 20 Hotels in South America" in Conde Nast Traveler's Readers' Choice Awards and rated among the top 1% of the best hotels in the world by TripAdvisor, Tivoli Mofarrej is an ideal sanctuary to start and end your journey.



Araras Ecolodge

Araras Ecolodge is located in the northern sector of the Pantanal, the primary wildlife sanctuary on the South American continent. Situated in an environment of mixed habitats and rare biodiversity, the lodge was built in harmony with its surroundings and is accessible via the Transpantaneira Park Road, 83 miles south of Cuiabá, the capital of the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso. Regional rustic style defines the lodge accommodations, and a simple, homey atmosphere prevails in its 19 guest rooms and shared spaces. Rooms have air conditioning with screened windows, ceiling fans and private bathrooms with cold and hot shower. Meals are served in the dining room or on the covered outdoor terrace adjacent to the swimming pool. The bar offers refreshing drinks, and hammocks invite relaxing on the large tiled veranda. Indoors, guests will find a reading room, gift shop and conference room for naturalist presentations. Food at Araras is a highlight, with delicious regional cuisine featuring locally-raised meat and fresh fish from Pantanal waters, as well as organic salads, vegetables, seasonal fruits and fresh juices. Activities around the lodge include Jeep photo safaris, nature trails that offer close-up views of Pantanal flora and fauna, and canoe excursions along placid channels.



The Hotel Pantanal Norte

Positioned in the heart of the Pantanal's best jaguar habitat, the family-run hotel was once the site of a small farm, run by the owner's grandparents. Its remote location was legendary for fishing, and as its reputation grew, so did the number of friends who wanted to stay in order to fish. And that's the beginning of what became the Hotel Pantanal Norte.

While the hotel still attracts avid fishermen, it is also perfectly situated for jaguar tracking and wildlife viewing along the rivers that lace the region. The hotel, while simple, is bright, comfortable and spotlessly clean. Rooms in bungalow blocks front the river or flowering gardens, shaded beneath leafy trees. Abundant birds, including hyacinth macaws and toucans, frequent the grounds. A swimming pool, game room and pool tables offer recreation after boat safaris. On boat rides into the watery wilderness, look for jaguars, of course, but also for giant otters, caimans, capybara, sloths, monkeys and more.



Caiman Ecological Refuge

Part of a renowned private research, conservation and ecotourism initiative, Caiman Ecological Refuge is located deep within the southern Pantanal inside an enormous private reserve. The lodge offers comfortable accommodations, a broad slate of ecological activities, and by far the best wildlife viewing in the area. The ecolodge lies at the heart of a 130,000-acre sustainable cattle ranch that exudes the distinctive local cowboy culture, reflecting 200 years of melded Portuguese, indigenous and Paraguayan traditions. The lodge was the first ecotourism operation in the region and remains a conservation leader. When the refuge was established, 10 percent of the ranch acreage was set aside as a private conservation area, off limits to cattle but open to visitors. The result is the very best and most exclusive wildlife-viewing experience in all the Pantanal.

About WWF Insider Journeys

This trip is an invitation-only conservation travel program for our closest supporters, along with friends and family, to see firsthand the positive impact World Wildlife Fund is making. These custom-designed journeys are led by WWF experts and offer exclusive opportunities to discover the wildlife and ecosystems we protect; meet community members whose lives are being improved because of our work, and immerse yourself in the worlds of our field staff and partners on the ground. Come explore the best of the natural world and see how together we are making a difference for our planet.

About Our Travel Partner



This journey is being arranged by Natural Habitat Adventures of Boulder, Colorado. For more than a decade, WWF has partnered with Nat Hab to take travelers to view nature's greatest sights. WWF selected Natural Habitat as its partner because of its long-standing commitment to conservation and the exceptional quality of its adventures.

Reservation Information & Trip Details

For reservations and additional information, please contact Court Whelan at Natural Habitat Adventures at 888-993-8687, (Int'l) 303-449-3711 or courtwh@nathab.com.

DATES:	September 8–18, 2023
GROUP SIZE:	Limited to 9 guests
LAND COST:	\$10,695 per person, double occupancy Internal air cost: \$1,777 Single Occupancy: For a single room add \$2,995
DEPOSIT:	\$500 per person (nonrefundable)

INCLUDED: Trip price includes: Accommodations, services of Nat Hab's professional Expedition Leader(s), travel costs for your WWF Expert, local guides and lodge staff, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on final day, most gratuities, airport transfers on Day 1 and final day, all activities and entrance fees, all taxes, permits and service fees.

Internal air cost includes: All private charter flights within the itinerary (this will be listed separately on our invoicing).

NOT INCLUDED: Travel to and from the start and end point of your trip, alcoholic beverages, some gratuities, passport and visa fees (if any), optional activities, items of a personal nature (phone calls, laundry and internet, etc.), airline baggage fees, airport and departure taxes (if any), required medical

evacuation insurance, optional travel protection insurance.

PAYMENTS: A nonrefundable deposit of \$500 confirms your space. Payments are accepted by credit card or by check made out to Natural Habitat.

CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS: Cancellations must be received in writing at Natural Habitat Adventures by US mail, email or fax. At the time Natural Habitat Adventures receives your written cancellation, the following per person penalties apply: On or before 120 days before the trip: Forfeit nonrefundable \$500 deposit. On or before 60 days before the trip: Forfeit 50% of tour cost. After 60 days before the trip: No refund.

INSURANCE: Since the areas we travel to on this trip are remote and wild (that's why we go there!), we require medical evacuation insurance for our guests' safety. If you decline the medical evacuation insurance coverage offered by Natural Habitat, we request that you send us documentation of the independent coverage you have selected. We will add the cost of a medical evacuation policy to your tour invoice until you provide our office with proof of coverage including your insurance company's name, contact number and your individual policy number. Thank you for understanding that our policy exists exclusively in the interest of our guests' safety.

To protect your investment and to provide peace of mind while you travel, we also strongly recommend purchasing comprehensive travel insurance. Plans may cover everything from medical treatment to trip cancellations and delays and lost luggage. Please contact our office if you would like more information about the medical evacuation and comprehensive travel insurance policies we offer by calling 800-543-8917.

GETTING THERE & GETTING HOME:

Arrival:

Arrive in São Paulo by 4 pm in order to attend a welcome dinner beginning at 7 pm on Day 1.

Departure:

You may depart São Paulo at any time on Day 11.

We can best serve you if our Natural Habitat Adventures Travel Desk makes your reservations, as our staff is intimately familiar with the special requirements of this program and can arrange the most efficient travel. Please call us at 800-543-8917. Note that while we offer you the best possible rates available to us on airfare and additional nights' accommodations, you may find better fares online.

While adventures are designed specifically for WWF's closest supporters and enhanced with WWF Experts, exclusive site visits, and enriched content, a minimum number of guests is required to run each trip. To avoid canceling, WWF and Nat Hab may fill unsold spots with WWF and non-WWF members.