



BIRDING

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Customized birding and natural history tours throughout Brazil.

AMAZONIA: POUSADA RIO ROOSEVELT

There is little doubt that the Pousada Rio Roosevelt is the most remote of a handful of excellent lodges in the southern Brazilian Amazon. Reached only by air, the lodge is situated in a privileged location surrounded by virgin rainforest, an endless green carpet we see from above on the inbound flight. Touching down, we are greeted by the lodge's friendly and attentive staff, for whom nothing is too much to ask. We have arrived in Paradise, and each day the dizzying biodiversity of the southern Amazon reminds us of this. The private veranda of each cabin looks out onto a white sand beach, at the edge of which flows the famed Rio Roosevelt, its waters still foamy and broiling after crashing over impressive rapids just upstream from the lodge. Pristine Amazon rainforest stretches away from the river in all directions farther than the eye can see, beyond even the limits of imagination. This idyllic setting is a naturalist's paradise. While the tranquility of the place is such that you could easily spend the week on your private front porch, or in the air-conditioned restaurant/lounge reading a book, we'll spend most of our time investing hard work in the field to reap some of the greatest avian rewards in all of South America...

Our tour spends seven full days at this remote lodge, where we will bird a vast trail system in various types of Amazonian forests along the Roosevelt and Madeirinha rivers. We will also bird by boat, scanning the riverbanks for the abundant and in many cases, tame, wildlife which abounds in this special place. Always important biological indicators, the large-bodied birds and mammals of the Rio Roosevelt have never been hunted, and thus shy species such as Razor-billed Curassows and Woolly Monkeys are common and confiding here. That's just the tip of the iceberg. Each day on these rivers brings new spectacles, be it the awkward antics of the prehistoric Hoatzin, the brilliant splashes of green on gray of a flock of parakeets eating algae from exposed rocks in the thundering rapids, or the opportunistic activity of obligate antbirds following swarming army ants. As an eminent Brazilian biologist remarked in the lodge guestbook, "finally I have arrived at a place without feeling that I have come too late." Treading on the banks of the Rio Roosevelt, one cannot help but feel the *wildness* of the place. Any yet there is nothing wild about the lodge itself: the spacious cabins are sensibly equipped with hot water showers, air-conditioning, and a bar fridge stocked with copious amounts of water, soft drinks and ice cold beer. After a long day in the forest and on the beautiful rivers, relaxing at the Pousada Rio Roosevelt in the evenings, one cannot help but feel that yes, *'this is the way to travel'*.

Suggested Itinerary:

Day 1: Arrival in Porto Velho.

The tour begins in Porto Velho, the capital of the state of Rondônia. There are daily connection to Porto Velho from most major Brazilian airports including São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Brasília.

Night in Porto Velho.

Day 2: Fly to Rio Roosevelt Lodge.

We leave early from our hotel to reach the airport just after first light, where our chartered small plane will be waiting to take us to the Rio Roosevelt. The flight takes between 50 and 70 minutes, depending on the weather and the size of the plane. As we leave Porto Velho behind the man-altered landscape below us will quickly be replaced by swatches and then soon an entire carpet of rich green as we pass only unbroken forest en route to one of the most remote yet comfortable lodges in the Brazilian Amazon. It is impossible not to feel a thrill as our

plane descends steadily, apparently lowering itself into the tall forest canopy, when suddenly the roaring rapids of the Rio Roosevelt appear below us mere seconds before the first bump of an expertly-performed landing.

After a quick tour of the lodge setting, we'll dump our bags and grab our binoculars to get started on a magnificent week's birding in a truly privileged setting. We'll probably just hang around the lodge for the first afternoon, but there is a palpable excitement inherent in every moment's birding at this place and you're sure to feel it!

Night at Pousada Rio Roosevelt.

Days 3 – 9: We have seven full days to explore the vast network of forest trails, navigate the Roosevelt and Madeirinha rivers, investigate forest clay licks, and climb the 30-metre canopy tower. It sounds like loads of time, but we'll leave having really only scratched the surface of the possibilities despite the fact we should record more than 300 species – incredible for just a week at a single site!

Some of the key species at the Pousada Rio Roosevelt include: Razor-billed Curassow, Zigzag Heron, White-browed Hawk, Harpy Eagle, Cryptic Forest-Falcon, Dark-winged Trumpeter, Crimson-bellied Parakeet, Kawall's Amazon, Pavonine Quetzal, Blue-cheeked Jacamar, Rufous-necked Puffbird, Black-girdled Barbet, Gould's Toucanet, Bamboo and Glossy Antshrike, Aripuanã Antwren, Manicoré Warbling-Antbird, Ferruginous-backed Antbird, White-breasted Antbird, Pale-faced Antbird, Chestnut-belted and Black-bellied Gnatcatchers, Rusty-belted Tapaculo, Hoffmanns' Woodcreeper, Buff-cheeked Tody-Flycatcher, Black-necked Red-Cotinga, Pompadour Cotinga, Snow-capped Manakin, White-browed Purplethroat, Tooth-billed Wren and Yellow-shouldered Grosbeak. There are also records of such mythical birds as the Rondônia Bushbird and the White-tailed Tityra from the lodge's extensive trail system.

Given its inaccessibility, it comes as no surprise that the Rio Roosevelt also offers excellent chances for encounters with rare or threatened mammals such as Jaguar, Woolly Monkey, Prince Bernhard's Titi-Monkey, Hershkovitz's Marmoset, Brazilian Tapir, Giant Otter and many others.

Nights at Pousada Rio Roosevelt.

Day 10: Return to Porto Velho.

Time flies, especially when you're seeing new birds. It will be a forlorn final morning, as we need to leave after breakfast to allow time to make connecting flights out of Porto Velho. Arrival in Porto Velho and end of tour.

PRICE

Please inquire by e-mail (bradley@birdingmatogrosso.com or birdingmatogrosso@gmail.com) for an up to date quote for this itinerary. When you write, please indicate your ideal travel period and the number of participants in your party.

DIFFICULTY

Fairly easy to moderate. Most of our birding will be done from the boat or on flat trails. A few of the trails cover hilly terrain, but the climbs are not difficult and typically short. The heat and humidity, combined with long birding mornings, can wear Northern birders down. We will always rest in the afternoons after lunch during the heat of the day before starting out again as bird activity starts to pick up in the late afternoons. A small fold-up portable chair or stool can be extremely useful.

ACCOMMODATION

Very good. The detached cabins have private hot-water shower, air-conditioning and a well-stocked bar fridge in the rooms in addition to plenty of hooks and shelves to hang up field clothing and store books and equipment. Food is simple but excellent and typically features freshly caught fish from the clean river. Power is provided by a generator which is run 24 hours; the electric current is 110V.

CLIMATE

Expect hot and humid conditions throughout the trip. Rain is possible at any time, even during dry season months (June to October), although it is less likely during that period. During the southern winter, cold fronts do push into the southern Amazon from time to time, causing overcast weather with lower temperatures (especially in early mornings) for periods of up to three or four days.

LUGGAGE

Please pack lightly for this trip as the extra weight we can carry on the small chartered planes is limited. The lodge offers daily laundry service to help visitors pack lightly. Please plan accordingly.

Also note that there are weight limits on both checked and carry-on baggage on internal flights in Brazil:

Checked baggage: 2 bags, 22 kg total

Carry-on: 1 bag + 1 purse or camera bag, 5 kg* total

Overweight baggage fees in Brazil vary from airline to airline, but expect to pay something on the order of R\$20 – R\$25 per kilogram overweight. Airlines will accept payment by credit card for overweight fees, but sometimes you will be required to leave the queue to pay these fees to a difference airline employee.

VISAS AND ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

A valid passport is required for entry into Brazil. It must be valid for at least six months past the time of your scheduled return. U.S., Canadian, and Australian citizens must obtain a visa in advance before traveling to Brazil; if you do not have a visa, you will not be allowed to board the airplane. **British and South African citizens do not need a visa.** Other nationalities should check with the Brazilian consulate or embassy in their home country.

You will be given an entry card at immigration upon arrival; keep it with your passport for the entire trip in case the authorities ask to inspect it. By law you are required to carry your passport with you at all times. It is a good idea to make a photocopy of your passport photo pages and visa page, and to keep the copy in a different place from the passport during the tour.

TIME ZONES

The states of Rondônia and Amazonas are UTC-04:00, one hour behind Brasília time (the time zone which covers the national capital and eastern Brazil).

CURRENCY

Brazil's national currency is the Real (pronounced *hay-OW*, and pluralized as *reais*). The colourful banknotes each have a creature from the Brazilian fauna and come in denominations of: R\$1, R\$2, R\$5, R\$10, R\$20, R\$50 and R\$100. As of mid-April 2016, the exchange rate against the U.S. Dollar was USD:BRL = 3.5:1.

The Real is the only widely accepted currency in Brazil, although U.S. dollars may be accepted in more upscale tourist hotels and travel agencies (but expect any change to be given in local currency). The easiest way to obtain local currency is to use a debit or credit card at an automated bank machine linked to the Cirrus/Mastercard or Visa/Plus networks; most banks charge a nominal fee for these transactions. Otherwise you may want to change money at a foreign exchange kiosk in the airport where you arrive to Brazil.

Credit cards are fairly widely accepted in hotels, restaurants, and shops. Visa and Mastercard are the most popular cards. Traveler's cheques are nearly impossible to use these days in Brazil.

In Tabajara credit cards are not accepted, and expect to have difficulties paying for any items if you only have larger denomination bank notes.

HEALTH

A current Yellow Fever vaccination is useful, as occasional outbreaks in remote areas of the country happen from time to time, but is no longer a requirement for travelers to Brazil unless you arriving directly from another country where Yellow Fever is endemic. The shot is good for ten years, and your clinic or travel doctor should give you a stamped and dated yellow card that serves as proof of vaccination. Always keep your basic shots such as tetanus, polio, and diphtheria up to date. **Always consult a travel doctor in your home country well before the start of your trip for qualified professional advice on vaccination requirements.**

There is a minimal malaria risk in the area of the Amazon we will visit, please consult a travel doctor regarding the appropriate anti-malarial regime.

Bring all prescription and over-the-counter medicines with you in sufficient quantities to last the entire trip, as well as a copy of your prescriptions with generic drug names.

All participants are urged to ensure they are covered with comprehensive travel insurance for the duration of the tour. We ask that you provide your policy number and insurer's contact information together with the participant details form sent to each member of the group separately. There are parallel health providers in Brazil, with a public option and a private option. The public option is woefully underfunded and overcrowded, and any treatment or procedures required during the tour will be sought at private hospitals with all costs covered by the client.