TOUR CODE

BR1

ADVENTURESABROAD

BRAZIL Samba Sensation

Sao Joao del Rei, Rio de Janeiro, Iguacu Falls, the Amazon & Pantanal

14 days

Updated 09/02/2013

Day 1 *Arrive in Sao Paulo*

Welcome to the megalopolis of Sao Paulo, Brazil's centre of industry and the powerhouse of the Brazilian economy. This city, founded in 1554, is now home to some eighteen million inhabitants, making it by far the largest city in the country and the world.

PLEASE NOTE: This tour is based on a TAM Brazilian Airlines pass that MUST be booked by Adventures Abroad in conjunction with TAM international air tickets. If you intend to secure your own international air a SURCHARGE (approx 500 USD) will apply.

Overnight in Sao Paulo. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 *Sao Paulo - Manaus - Amazon: Canoe Trip*

Early this morning we fly to Manaus, the capital of Amazonas, a tropical forest state covering around 1 500 000 sq km. It is also the commercial and physical hub of the entire Amazon region. On arrival we continue to our Amazon lodge.

The very mention of the name Amazon conjures images of adventure and mystery. Designated the world's largest rainforest and one of the world's largest rivers, Amazon defines the word "exotic". The term "rainforest" describes forests that grow in constant humid conditions. They can occur whenever the annual rainfall is above 2000 mm (80 inches) per year, and high temperatures favour plant development.

The Amazon River is almost 6440 km (4,000 miles) long, with a volume of water equal to 11 times the volume of the Mississippi River. Amazonia, consisting mainly of forest, forms more than 50% of Brazil's area, though only 7% of its total population. Most of the Amazon's inhabitants live in and around a few cities including Manaus, a thousand miles from the ocean.

Using a comfortable lodge as a base, we will explore the Amazon's maze of forest and mysterious waters. We hope to observe exotic birds such as parrots, toucans, and macaws. You may see "boto", a kind of river dolphin. We will visit a caboclo village, home to the local people whose ancestors are half Indian and half Portuguese.

This afternoon we enjoy a canoe trip* in smaller creeks to see life on the flood plains: jute, market-garden produce, rubber trees, as well as flood plain forest and lakes with giant water lilies (in season).

* NOTE: Our activities in the Amazon may vary depending upon seasonality, weather, and other considerations, at the discretion of your Tour Leader and local guides.

Overnight at an Amazon lodge. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 *Amazon: Bird Watching & Forest Walks*

We have an early morning canoe trip for bird watching. There are good chances of seeing large flocks of egrets and cormorants. We visit the human inhabitants of the lake area who make a living on manioc plantations, fishing, diverse fruit trees, rubber, Brazil-nut trees, wood and other extractive products. We walk in the forest with commentaries by our local guide. A night trip enables us to see nocturnal animals, sometimes including nighthawks, snakes, toro-rats, sloths and frogs.

SEASONALITY: in the rainy season, which roughly runs from mid-December to mid-May, the temperature is a bit cooler than the June-December dry season. The average daytime temperature in the rainy season is usually in the mid-20's C (80's F) with nighttime lows in the mid teens C (70's to high 60's). In the dry season the daytime temperature can go up to the mid-30's C (90's) though there is much variability and cool days are common. Nighttime temperatures during the dry season are usually in the mid-20's (70's), though there are also some very cool nights.

Is it desirable to travel to the Amazon in the rainy season? Yes! Even though it does rain more this time of year, it is also true that many plants have evolved to fruit and flower during the rainy season which attracts birds and primates to the water's edge for us to observe. The gigantic thunderstorms are a great pleasure to observe.

Overnight at an Amazon lodge. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 4 *Amazon - Manaus*

We have another early morning excursion on nearby waterways.

We return to Manaus.

Overnight in Manaus. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Manaus - Campo Grande - Pantanal*

Today we fly from Manaus to Campo Grande, gateway to the Pantanal, home to the highest concentration of wildlife in South America. On arrival we transfer by road to the Pousada Aguape, situated 160 km (100 miles) from Campo Grande. The Aguape Ranch was founded 150 years ago and is still owned by the same family. Through the years the farm activities have diversified. The Ranch is home for a school, a regional horse breeder, and a Hyacinth Macaw project, cattle ranching, and now a tourism area with a large variety and quantity of wildlife.

The Pousada Aguape is equipped with 14 apartments with air-conditioning and ceiling fans. The pousada has a swimming pool, and a restaurant.

The great diversity of animal species in the region arises from vast differences in habitat. Savannah flood plains, dry forests and humid, temperate zones co-exist with grassy plains and scrubby vegetation. A total of 80 mammal, 50 reptile, and 650 bird species have been identified here -- however, none of them are indigenous to the area. Among the residents are 13 endangered species -- among them jaguar, otter and anteater.

Overnight in Pantanal region. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Pantanal: Exploration*

This morning we embark on a full-day safari-style exploration of this remarkable region.

In its two distinct seasons, the Pantanal presents a constant, unequaled spectacle. From December to April is the flood season when the rivers overflow and spread themselves for miles uniting with the bays and creeks creating a true ocean of sweet water. This is a beautiful period of Pantaneira flora -- the green explodes and provides breeding ground for flora and water-loving fauna. Excursions at this time of year usually involve exciting exploration by boat/canoe for at least part of the time.

RAINY season (Dec through Apr): due to the intense rain, the Pantanal gets flooded. The vegetation is exuberant and the temperature is high. Mammals seek refuge on higher ground with tall trees known as "Cordilheiras". This is the nesting time for many species of birds.

DRY season (Jul through Sep): This is the best time for wildlife observation. The dry fields make good grazing areas. From August on most of the trees are blooming. Overnight temperatures can approach freezing.

Overnight in Pantanal region. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 7 *Pantanal: Full Day*

Our final full day in the Pantanal.

Our wilderness adventure continues today. The Pantanal is renowned for it spectacled caimans -- a crocodile species which grow up to 3m (10 feet) in length. Once nearly endangered, today there are nearly 10 million in existence in the Pantanal. In addition, the area's waterways are filled with brightly coloured kingfisher and teem with the infamous piranha. Birds abound in the Pantanal and are more numerous than anywhere else in South America. Look out for eagle, stork, nandu, jabiru, macaw and ibis.

Overnight in Pantanal region. Meal plan: Breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Day 8 *Pantanal - Campo Grande - Rio de Janeiro*

Today we travel to Campo Grande from where we fly to Rio de Janeiro, the Ciudade Marvailhosa (marvelous city).

Seven million Cariocas, as the inhabitants are called, are jammed into one of the world's most beautiful city setting -- between ocean and escarpment. This makes Rio one of the most densely populated places on earth. Cariocas pursue pleasures like no other people: beaches and the body beautiful, samba and football; cerveja (beer); and cachaca (sugar-cane rum). In Rio everything ends with samba -- football games, weddings, work, political demonstrations and, of course, a day at the beach. There's a lust for life, and a love of romance, music, dance and a talk that distinguishes the Cariocas from everyone else.

Overnight in Rio de Janeiro. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 *Rio de Janeiro: City Tour*

Today we have a tour of Rio. The city is divided into a zona norte (north zone) and a zona sul (south zone) by the Serra da Carioca, steep mountains that are part of the Parque Nacional da Tijuca. These mountains descend to the edge of the city centre, where the zonas norte and sul meet. Corcovado, one of these mountain peaks, offers the best way to become familiar with the city's geography -- from it you have views of both zones. The statue Cristo Redentor (Christ the Redeemer), with his outstretched arms, gazes down on the Bahia da Guanabara and the landmark Pao de Acucar (Sugar

Loaf). His left arm points toward the zona norte, and his right toward the zona sul suburbs of Copacabana, Ipanema, Leblon and beyond.

We enjoy a sightseeing ride along Rio's beaches -- Leblon, Ipanema and Copacabana. One of the world's most famous beaches runs 4.5 km (3 miles) in front of one of the world's most densely populated residential areas. There is always something happening on the beach during the day and along the footpaths at night: drinking, singing, eating and all kinds of people checking out the scene; tourists watching Brazilians.

From the scalloped beach you can see the granite slabs that surround the entrance to the bay -- a magnificent meeting of land and sea. Different parts of the beach attract different crowds.

We take cable cars to the top of Sugar Loaf Mountain. From the top of this celebrated peak, the city, Baia de Guanabara, and the winding coastline are stretched out dazzling below. To reach the summit at a lofty 400 m (1,325 feet) it is necessary to take two cable cars. A clear day will supply the most spectacular of views: the uncurling arch of the Praia de Copacabana, its miles of tiles glistening in the sun's last rays. From the top you'll see Corcovado Mountain, with the massive statue of Cristo Redemtor (Christ the Redeemer), his arms extended in mercy and blessing.

Overnight in Rio de Janeiro. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Rio de Janeiro - Sao Joao del Rei - Tiradentes*

Today we drive to the region of Minas Gerais. Minas Gerais presents a welcome contrast to the rest of Brazil. While the name means "General Mines", the state is packed with exquisite colonial towns, seemingly frozen in another epoch. Their baroque churches and sacred art, mostly sculptures from one of the world's great artists, Aleijadinho, represent over half of Brazil's national monuments.

Nestled in the Sierra do Espinhaco mountain range are the 'cidades historicas', historic colonial cities that grew up with the great gold boom. The foothills and streams of these mountains were scoured for gold throughout the 18th century. Minas also has several hydromineral spa towns in the mountainous southwest corner and a number of prehistoric caves close to the capital, Belo Horizonte.

This afternoon we arrive in Sao Joao del Rei. This city is the only colonial city to have adjusted successfully to life after the gold rush. It has all the usual charm of the other historic cities -- gilded churches, museums, colonial mansions -- but it also has a thriving market town. Easily the largest of the colonial cities with a population of over 80,000, Sao Joao del Rei's modern prosperity complements the colonial atmosphere rather than compromises it. With its wide central boulevard enclosing a small stream, its stone bridges, squares and streets, Sao Joao del Rei is a very attractive place. After an informal visit, we will travel the short distance to Tiradentes.

Tiradentes is small and lovely Gold Rush town is set against a backdrop of the Sao Jose Mountains at an altitude of 930 metres (3,050 feet). Enjoy exploring its cobbled streets on foot, including visits to the Church of Saint Anthony, the town's patron saint, and the Museum of Padre Toledo, housed in an 18th century mansion.

Overnight in Tiradentes. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *Tiradentes - Ouro Preto*

Today we drive to Ouro Preto. Today's drive is spectacular, with roads winding around hill country, passing several valleys where patches of forest survive. We arrive in Ouro Preto -- a relatively small town which was once the Portuguese base during a war between the Portuguese and the Paulista bandeirantes. Later the town became the capital

of the gold-producing area of Minas, and today it is rich with 18th century churches.

The balance of today is spent exploring this colonial town.

Overnight in Ouro Preto. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 12 *Ouro Preto - Iguacu Falls*

Today we fly to Iguacu Falls.

The Iguacu Falls are formed by the Rio Iguacu, which has its source near Curitiba. Starting at an altitude of 1300 m (4,264 feet), the river snakes westward, picking up tributaries and increasing in size and power during its 1200 km (745 mile) journey. About 15 km (9 miles) before joining the Rio Parana, the Iguacu broadens out, then plunges precipitously over an 80 m (263 foot) high cliff. The 275 interlinking cataracts extend nearly 3 km (2 miles) across the river.

On arrival, we'll head to the viewing area from where you will quickly appreciate the enormous size of the falls. From numerous spots all along the path there are excellent views, at first across the lower river at a point where it has narrowed to channel width. At the bottom of the path, where the river widens again, there's a catwalk leading out towards the falls themselves. Depending on the force of the river, the spray can be quite heavy so, if you have a camera, be sure to carry a plastic bag.

Overnight at Iguacu Falls. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *Iguacu Falls*

Today is yours to enjoy the Iguacu / (Iguazu in Spanish) area.

You will also be able to view the falls from the Argentine side (OPTIONAL expense; your Brazilian visa allows multiple entries - Your Tour Leader will advise of the current cost of this excursion).

Overnight at Iguacu Falls. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 14 *Departure*

Departure from Iguacu (Airport Iguassu / IGU).

VIAGEM BOA!! Meal plan: Breakfast.