EXPERIENCE · CÁCERES AND THE GUIRÁ · 6 DAYS, HALF AFLOAT

Rhythms of the Western Pantanal

Jaguars and cowboys along the Rio Paraguai

Three days tracking jaguars by boat through the strictly protected Taiamã reserve, then three days in the saddle in the Parque do Guirá, the least explored corner of the whole wetland. Two ways of living, one frontier, and Bolivia on the far shore.

See both halves

DAYS 1 TO 3

On the water

Boat safaris down the Rio Paraguai and a full day inside Taiamã.

DAY 1 *Cáceres* · DAY 2 *Rio Paraguai* · DAY 3 *Taiamã*

DAYS 4 TO 6

In the saddle

Horseback and 4×4 across the Guirá, and life on a working ranch.

DAY 4 *Parque do Guirá* · DAY 6 *Back to Cuiabá*

☆ WHAT EVERYONE ACTUALLY REMEMBERS: IMENSIDÃO

THE FAR WESTERN EDGE

This is not the postcard Pantanal.

It is the far western edge, out where the wetland presses up against the Bolivian border and quietly turns into something else. You spend the first half of the journey on the water, tracking jaguars and giant otters through the strictly protected Taiamã reserve, and the second half on land, in the saddle and behind the wheel of a jeep, in a place that maps still barely describe.

That place is the Parque Estadual do Guirá, widely held to be the least explored and least visited region in the whole Pantanal. Because it sits so far west, the Chaco biome already bleeds into it, so the plants and animals are not quite the ones you meet elsewhere in the wetland. There are more armadillos here than anywhere else in the Pantanal, and a handful of remote lakes so far off the map that their far shore is Bolivia.

You will sleep simply, in a pousada, then a river lodge or a houseboat, then a working cattle ranch, because this is an expedition and not a resort. What you trade in luxury you gain many times over in encounters, silence and space. Use the days below as a frame. Every departure is private and we happily reshape it around your pace and the animals.

6 days

FIVE NIGHTS, CUIABÁ OUT AND CUIABÁ BACK

2 halves

THREE DAYS BY BOAT, THEN THREE IN THE SADDLE AND THE JEEP

Guirá

WIDELY HELD TO BE THE LEAST EXPLORED REGION IN THE WHOLE PANTANAL

Bolívia

THE FAR SHORE OF THE REMOTE LAKES YOU REACH ON THE LAND HALF

DUAS VIDAS, UMA FRONTEIRA

Two ways of life, one frontier

The far west holds two completely different answers to the same question of how to live with water that arrives and leaves every year. This trip gives you three days inside each of them.

I

DAYS 2 AND 3

The river people

Along the Paraguai, life is arranged around water that rises and falls by meters each year. Families fish, read the flood, and move when it tells them to. You travel their river with them for three days, and their boats are still the only traffic on it.

II

DAYS 4 AND 5

The Pantaneiros

Brazil’s traditional cowboys work cattle across floodplain that is a lake for half the year and a dust bowl for the other half. You do not watch this from a fence. You ride out with them, take a hand in the day’s work, and eat what the ranch kitchen cooks.

DAYS 4 AND 5

The Guirá frontier

The country that shaped them both. This far west the Chaco biome bleeds into the wetland, so the plants and animals are not quite the ones you meet elsewhere in the Pantanal, and a handful of the remote lakes look straight across at Bolivia.

CÁCERES → TAIAMÃ → O GUIRÁ

Six days, and the trip turns inside out halfway

A sample rhythm, not a timetable. Every departure is private, and the days at the ranch in particular are yours to arrange over breakfast.

1 DAY 1 · CÁCERES · ON THE WATER

The river town

Two hours west, and the country changes

We collect you in Cuiabá, at the airport or your hotel, and drive about two hours west to Cáceres, the historic river town on the banks of the Rio Paraguai. The road through Mato Grosso already hints at the wilderness ahead. You check into a simple, charming pousada, and if you still have

energy we suggest a stroll along the old riverfront for a first taste of the region's colonial past and easygoing river life.

Cáceres is the jumping-off point for everything that follows, and worth an evening in its own right. It is a working river town rather than a tourist one, which means the waterfront belongs to fishermen and the bars belong to whoever got there first. Enjoy the last cold drink you will order from a menu for a while.

Private transfer from Cuiabá | Historic riverfront | Easy first evening

OVERNIGHT · A simple, charming pousada in Cáceres

2 DAY 2 · RIO PARAGUAI · ON THE WATER

Downriver

The safari starts the moment you cast off

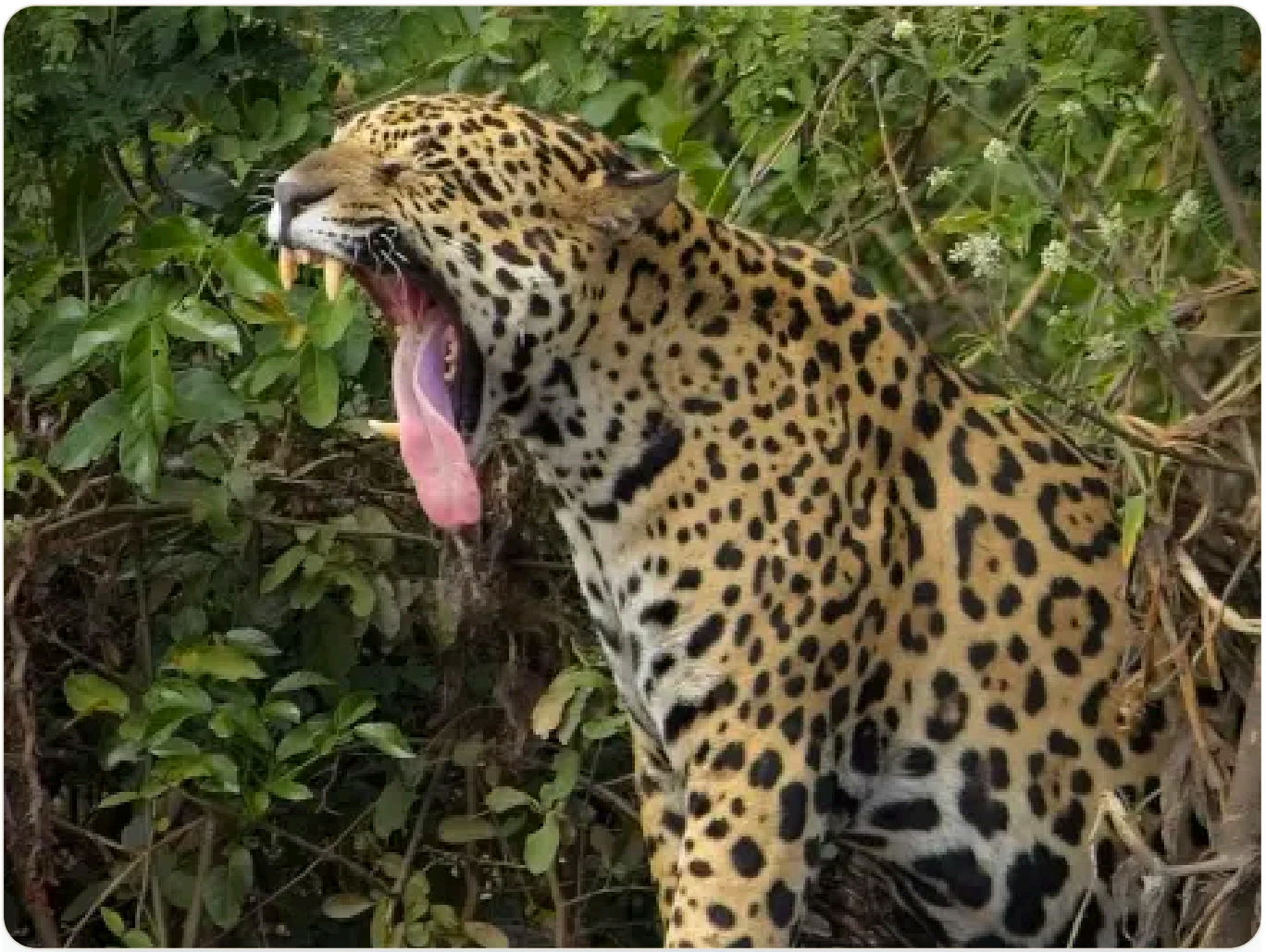
Early in the morning you board your private safari boat in Cáceres and travel downriver into the remote west. The safari begins at once: capybaras, herons, caimans, and with luck a first jaguar straight from the boat, while a colonial border marker and jungle-covered ruins slip past on the banks. After three or four hours you reach your base, a small comfortable lodge at the edge of the wilderness, or, for something truly special, a simple houseboat moored midriver with its own cook.

Lunch, then your first jaguar safari through the quiet side channels, and after dark a night safari, the spotlight catching the glowing eyes of caimans and perhaps a tapir or a night monkey. The night outing is the one people underestimate. Half the wetland only comes out after the heat goes, and a spotlight on still black water turns the riverbank into something entirely different from the place you traveled through that morning.

Private safari boat | First jaguar safari | Lodge or houseboat | Night safari by spotlight

OVERNIGHT · A small river lodge, or a houseboat moored midriver

MEALS · Breakfast, lunch, dinner



3 DAY 3 · TAIAMÃ · ON THE WATER

Jaguar day

A whole day in the strictest reserve in the wetland

The whole day is spent on a boat safari through the Taiamã Ecological Reserve, one of the most strictly protected areas in the Pantanal and among the very best places on Earth to watch wild jaguars. Lunch travels with you, because you will be far from anything but water and forest. Giant otters, capybaras, toucans and a dazzle of birdlife round out the day.

In the late afternoon there is time to rest, or to try the local craft of piranha fishing, before you head back onto the water for one of the region's great gifts, a Pantanal sunset over the mirrored river. This is the last night on the water, and worth staying up for. Tomorrow the trip turns inside out and everything you have got used to, the boat, the channels, the sound of water against a hull, is replaced by dust and horses.

Full day in Taiamã | Giant otters | Piranha fishing | Pantanal sunset

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OVERNIGHT · A second night at the river lodge or houseboat

MEALS · Breakfast, light lunch, dinner

4·5 DAYS 4 & 5 · PARQUE DO GUIRÁ · IN THE SADDLE

Ranch life

You leave the water for the least explored corner of the Pantanal

You leave the water for a remote cattle ranch beside the Parque do Guirá, one of the wildest and least developed protected areas in Brazil. From the river you ride an hour further downstream to a historic landing, where a 4×4 waits for a scenic drive of about two and a half hours through untouched country, with wildlife along the way. At the ranch you live the real life of the Pantaneiros, Brazil's traditional cowboys, in simple comfortable rooms with homemade regional food.

Over two days you choose your own rhythm: horseback rides across open savanna, a hand in the daily work of the ranch, dawn birdwatching, and 4×4 safaris into the Guirá itself, where the Chaco influence brings giant anteaters, more armadillos than anywhere else in the Pantanal, rheas, tapirs and even jaguars, and where some of the remote lakes look straight across to Bolivia.

Two days is exactly the right amount of time to stop being a guest and start being useful, which is the point of coming here rather than to a lodge. There is no schedule pinned to a wall. You say at

breakfast what you feel like doing, someone saddles the horses or fuels the jeep, and the day arranges itself around the animals and the heat. Evenings end at the campfire under an enormous sky.

Parque do Guirá | Horseback across savanna | 4×4 Chaco safaris | Dawn birdwatching | Campfire nights

OVERNIGHT · Two nights in a private room on a working cattle ranch

MEALS · Breakfast, lunch, dinner daily

6 DAY 6 · CÁCERES AND CUIABÁ · IN THE SADDLE

The long drive out

Still in safari mode all the way to the airport

After a last breakfast with the Pantaneiros it is time to say goodbye. You climb into the jeep for a scenic drive of three to four hours back toward Cáceres, stopping whenever something appears,

perhaps a final anteater, a toco toucan, or a flock of brilliant hyacinth macaws.

In Cáceres your private transfer is waiting to bring you back to Cuiabá, where your journey ends, or where a new chapter of your Brazil begins. If you would like to linger, the area around Cáceres holds more worthwhile excursions, and we are glad to advise you.

Wildlife drive out | Hyacinth macaws | Private transfer to Cuiabá

MEALS · Breakfast

QUEM VIVE POR AQUI

Who lives out here

The Chaco frontier gives the far west a cast list the rest of the Pantanal does not quite have. Nothing is guaranteed, and that is what makes it worth the drive.

Onça-pintada

Jaguar

The largest cat in the Americas, and the reason most people come. Taiamã is one of the best places on Earth to watch one, and the Guirá holds them too, out where nobody is looking.

Ariranha

Giant otter

Up to nearly two meters of extremely loud, extremely social predator. Families work the channels together and announce themselves long before you see them.

Tamanduá-bandeira

Giant anteater

The signature animal of the dry plains and a genuinely strange sight in the open: enormous tail, no teeth, and an indifference to jeeps that borders on rude.

Tatus

Armadillos

The Guirá holds more of them than anywhere else in the Pantanal, a quirk of its Chaco frontier position. Best odds are on the night drives.

Ema

Greater rhea

South America’s largest bird, flightless, fast, and often crossing open savanna in a line with a train of chicks behind.

Anta

Lowland tapir

The biggest land mammal on the continent and a shy one. Night safaris and dawn waterholes are where your chances are.

Arara-azul

Hyacinth macaw

The largest flying parrot in the world, cobalt blue, and loud enough that you hear the pair before the guide points. A departure-day favorite.

Tuiuiú

Jabiru stork

The emblem of the Pantanal, standing close to your own height on a sandbank as though it owns it, which functionally it does.

Capivara

Capybara

The world’s largest rodent, present in absurd numbers, permanently unbothered, and the main item on the jaguar’s menu.

ALL HANDLED

What travels with you

A private guide who speaks English

Your own guide accompanies you throughout, from and to Cáceres, with expert local knowledge, personal attention and a steady hand on safety during every activity.

All private transfers

Pickup and drop-off in Cuiabá, the boat transfer along the Rio Paraguai and the 4×4 ground transfer out to the remote ranch. Every leg is yours alone.

Boat safaris on the river and in Taiamã

Safaris on the Rio Paraguai and through the Taiamã reserve, one of the finest places anywhere to see wild jaguars, giant otters, capybaras, caimans and birds.

Night safaris by boat and jeep

Spotlit outings after dark to look for the wetland's nocturnal life, with chances of tapirs, night monkeys, caimans and, now and then, a jaguar on the move.

Ranch life with the Pantaneiros

Horseback rides and 4×4 safaris in the Parque do Guirá, a hand in daily cowboy work, and campfire evenings under the open sky on a working cattle ranch.

Five nights and meals as listed

Authentic overnights in a pousada, a river lodge or houseboat and the ranch, with the meals shown in the itinerary, honest regional cooking throughout.

Not included: flights, drinks beyond those at meals, and personal extras. No hidden lines, ever.

GOOD TO KNOW

Honest answers first

- What makes the Parque do Guirá so special? +
- How comfortable are the accommodations? +
- Do I need to be able to ride a horse? +
- When is the best time to travel? +
- How does this compare with the expedition cruise? +
- Can we add more days or extend the trip? +

WHAT REMAINS

Imensidão

Ask anyone who has been out here what they remember and almost nobody starts with the jaguar. They start with the size of it: a horizon with nothing on it in any direction, a sky that takes up more of the view than the land does, and a silence that has no edges. Portuguese calls it imensidão, and there is no tidy English word for it.

Six days, two ways of living, one corner of the Pantanal that maps still barely describe. Tell us your dates and we will build this route around your pace. Many travelers add an extra day at the ranch for more time in the saddle and the silence of the Guirá.

WHERE IN BRAZIL

the Western Pantanal on the map

The trip begins in Cáceres on the Rio Paraguai, deep in the far west of Mato Grosso state, and pushes on to the Taiamã reserve and the Parque do Guirá, where the wetland presses right up against the Bolivian border.

REGION

Far western Pantanal, Mato Grosso

BEST SEASON

Jun–Oct dry season for jaguars

KNOWN FOR

Boat safaris · Horseback & fazenda life

IDEAL FOR

Wildlife lovers, adventurous travelers

View the Central-West on the interactive map →

WHEN TO GO

Best: July

6 days. Outside the best window it can still run, but the reasons to go are weaker; ask us before booking flights.

See what else is in season →

JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV DEC

Best — The one or two peak months

Good — A real recommendation

Trade-offs — Workable, with a catch

Click a month to see everything in season across Brazil then.

CONTINUE YOUR JOURNEY

Where to go next

The places we most love to combine with the Western Pantanal, woven into one private, tailor-made journey.

Pantanal

Mato Grosso, Brazil

The one place on earth where you can plan to see a jaguar.

Foz do Iguaçu

Paraná, Brazil

Two hundred and seventy-five waterfalls, in two countries.

Rio de Janeiro

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The Marvelous City, Privately

FREE · 29 PAGES

FREE GUIDE

Beginner's Guide to Brazil

A free 29-page guide to everything a first-time visitor should know before landing: visas, safety, money, getting around, where to go, and what to eat.

The guide lands in your inbox right away. After that it's about one email a month: seasonal timing notes, places worth knowing about, and nothing else. Unsubscribe in one click.

START PLANNING

Thinking about the Western Pantanal?

Send a rough idea and you'll hear back within one business day. From one person, who lives in Brazil, and who will tell you honestly whether we're the right fit.