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**Brazil**  
***Pantanal's Big Five***  
August 5 to 22, 2023



Jaguar  
© Elaine Heron

## **SAFARI OVERVIEW**

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Explore the vast Pantanal for South America's Big Five – jaguar, giant anteater, giant otter, ocelot, and South American tapir. Travel via boat, private bus, and safari vehicles through regions where marshes, lakes, and streams provide a diverse ecosystem that fosters superb encounters with these awe-inspiring mammals plus many beautiful birds, like the hyacinth macaw. Journey down the famous Transpantaneira Highway in the northern Pantanal to Porto Jofre where cruises on the Cuiabá River afford numerous opportunities to see jaguars, giant otters, and other wildlife not easily seen by land. While in the southern Pantanal, stay at Caiman Lodge, a top wildlife destination, and also a sure bet for giant anteaters and ocelots. Join biologists in the field to learn about this region's wildlife research and conservation efforts. Don't miss this UNESCO world heritage site and biosphere reserve of spectacular beauty!

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Boat down river to spot jaguar cooling off on the banks, keeping an eye out for giant river otters.
- Head out at night to search for nocturnal animals such as ocelot, giant anteater, South American tapir, and Yacaré caiman.
- View the world's largest parrot, the hyacinth macaw, and the prehistoric-looking jabiru stork along the Transpantaneira Highway.
- Join conservation researchers in the field and learn about conservation issues faced in this region.

**LEADER:** Diogo Lucatelli.

**DAYS:** 18, including estimated travel time.

**GROUP SIZE:** 10.

**COST:** \$13,900 per person, double occupancy, not including airfare (except for three internal flights), singles extra. See the *Costs* section on page 5.

Date	Description	Accommodation	Meals
Aug 5	Travel to São Paulo, Brazil.		
Aug 6	Meet Diogo in São Paulo, then fly to Cuiabá. Drive the Transpantaneira Highway to Araras.	Araras Eco Lodge, Northern Pantanal	D
Aug 7	Explore Araras.		B, L, D
Aug 8	Morning game drive at Araras, then drive and sightsee south to Porto Jofre.	Hotel Pantanal Norte, Porto Jofre	B, L, D
Aug 9–12	Boat trips on the Cuiabá River to find jaguar, giant otters, monkeys, and birds.		B, L, D
Aug 13	Morning boat ride, then fly from Porto Jofre to Pousada Aguapé.	Pousada Aguapé, Southern Pantanal	B, L, D
Aug 14	Learn about local issues and wildlife at Pousada Aguapé with conservation researchers.		B, L, D
Aug 15	More research at Pousada Aguapé; drive to Fazenda San Francisco in the afternoon.	Fazenda San Francisco, Southern Pantanal	B, L, D
Aug 16	Search for giant anteater, ocelot, and other wildlife at Fazenda San Francisco.		B, L, D
Aug 17	Morning search for wildlife, then travel to Caiman Lodge.	Caiman Lodge, Southern Pantanal	B, L, D
Aug 18–19	Look for giant anteaters and other wildlife around Caiman Lodge.		B, L, D
Aug 20	Morning game drive at Caiman Lodge, then travel to Campo Grande.	Hotel Deville Prime, Campo Grande	B, L, D
Aug 21	Flights from Campo Grande to São Paulo and then homeward.		B
Aug 22	Arrive home.		

## LEADER

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### **Diogo Lucatelli**

Diogo studied Biology at Bahia Federal University, one of the most renowned academies in Brazil, and began working as a naturalist guide in the Pantanal region in 2011. His skills in zoology, animal behavior, botany, animal tracking, ecology, birding, and photography have propelled his career in guiding for renowned lodges, safari groups, and research programs. On safari, Diogo aspires to build a bond between travelers and nature and instill a commitment to conservation by sharing his experiences, knowledge, and love for the region.

## DETAILED ITINERARY

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### Aug 5 ~ Travel to São Paulo, Brazil

We recommend arriving in São Paulo today. We can book you an overnight at a hotel near the airport at an extra cost, which includes the transfer from the airport today and back to the airport tomorrow for the flight to Cuiabá.

### Aug 6 ~ Fly to Cuiabá then drive south to Araras

Arrive in São Paulo by early morning at the latest. Diogo will meet you at the São Paulo Airport to catch the mid-morning flight to Cuiabá located in the northern part of the state of Mato Grosso. Upon arrival, drive across 56mi of the Cerrado region (Brazilian savanna) to the town of Poconé, and then drive 26mi south to the entrance of the Transpantaneira Highway – a truly extraordinary gravel road traversing some 93mi of the Pantanal. You will continue south down the Transpantaneira to Araras.

### Aug 7 ~ Explore Araras

Explore the grounds of the Araras Eco Lodge, which include 7,413 hectares of wetlands, forest, and savannah. You can find birds, such as the cinereous-breasted spinetails and Mato Grosso antbirds, in the woodlands around the lodge and along an elevated boardwalk. The Araras property extends east of the Transpantaneira into the dry grasslands where you have a great chance to view both lesser and giant anteaters. After dinner, you will go on a night drive, the best time to encounter tamandua (also known as the lesser anteater) and perhaps a South American tapir.



Hyacinth Macaws  
© Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

### Aug 8 ~ Morning safari then drive to Porto Jofre

After an early morning safari at Araras, you'll journey south down the Transpantaneira Highway to the Cuiabá River in Porto Jofre, making stops along the way. Water lingers alongside the Transpantaneira, concentrating a wide variety of wildlife. Diogo is very familiar with this area and knows some excellent places to stop to stretch your legs and take photographic opportunities.

The principal avian emblems of the Pantanal are the jabiru stork standing five feet tall and the hyacinth macaw, the world's largest parrot. The hyacinth macaw is usually near lodges where they easily steal the show while feeding on palm seeds. You can sometimes see two species of brocket deer, plus pampas and marsh deer, in the tall grassland.



Black-striped Capuchin  
© Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

### Aug 9–12 ~ Search the Rio Cuiabá surroundings by boat

The best chances to spot jaguar are on the Rio Cuiabá. The jaguars in this region are protected and have become accustomed to boats full of photographers pointing lenses at them. You'll ride in boats that can quickly reach the various tributaries of the Rio Cuiabá where the cats may be lounging or hunting.

You'll enjoy morning and late afternoon private boat trips when the sun isn't directly overhead. Besides the beautifully colored birds, keep an eye out for mammals, including black-striped tufted capuchins, the crab-eating

fox, South American tapir, and the enigmatic ocelot. You may encounter the most noteworthy reptiles throughout the Pantanal, including hundreds of Yacaré caimans and some green iguanas, and if you are lucky, you may come across a rare yellow anaconda.

### **Aug 13 ~ Fly from Porto Jofre to Pousada Aguapé**

Start today with another morning boat trip. After lunch, take a charter flight to Pousada Aguapé, a remote working ranch with abundant opportunities for wildlife encounters.

### **Aug 14 ~ Search for wildlife at Pousada Aguapé**

With a base near Pousada Aguapé, the Peccary Project (Projeto Queixada) has partnered with the surrounding rural community to protect the Pantanal's biodiversity. The ranch's sustainable practices have contributed to the high wildlife diversity you will see as you tour the area. Local researchers from the Peccary Project will show you their conservation work in the region, including their work on the critically endangered white-lipped peccary.

### **Aug 15 ~ Morning search for wildlife, then drive to Fazenda San Francisco**

Continue your search for more magnificent birds and charismatic mammals of the southern Pantanal region. In the afternoon, you will travel to nearby Fazenda San Francisco.

### **Aug 16 ~ Explore the Pantanal around Fazenda San Francisco**

Here, you'll have your best chances of finding giant anteater and ocelot on game drives and during nightspotting, and sometimes you may even see jaguar, maned wolf, and South American tapir. Fazenda San Francisco has extensive native forest, wetlands, and grasslands, but it's also a working ranch with cattle pastures and vast rice fields. The owner and staff work very hard to preserve wildlife, particularly to protect the rare mammals. Blue-and-yellow macaws, parrots, parakeets, toucans, and toucanets are plentiful right around the lodge and are extremely habituated. You'll game drive in the evening and at dawn for the best action, and enjoy breaks on the lodge grounds during the warm part of the day.

### **Aug 17 ~ Fazenda San Francisco game drive, then travel to Caiman Lodge**

Take another early morning game drive before heading to the famous Caiman Lodge.

### **Aug 18–19 ~ Explore wildlife around Caiman Lodge**

Caiman Lodge, which is best of the best of nature lodges in South America, has charming accommodations, a very experienced friendly staff, delicious food, very high-quality service, and best of all, amazing wildlife! This is our favorite location in all of the Pantanal. You'll begin your explorations in the beautiful surroundings for birds and other wildlife. You'll also enjoy night drives to spot nocturnal wildlife in action. You have good chances for locating jaguars, but the overall wildlife experience while immersed in beautiful native habitat is the highlight here at Caiman, named for the plethora of Yacaré caimans, who peer with their gleaming, beady eyes at night. With luck, you will encounter mother giant anteaters with young on their backs, gray brocket deer, pampas deer, two species of armadillos, tapeti (Brazilian rabbit), and crab-eating raccoon. Elusive wildlife is very challenging to photograph, so you'll spend ample time in nature to be sure to get some great images.



Yacaré Caiman  
© Bravo Brazil Expeditions

### **Aug 20 ~ Morning at Caiman Lodge, then depart to Campo Grande**

Spend the last morning photographing the resident macaws and other species. If the light is not ideal, or the group prefers, you can take a drive to the river for some action there!

### **Aug 21 ~ Travel homeward**

You'll transfer as a group to the Campo Grande Airport for your flight to São Paulo and then homeward.

### **Aug 22 ~ Arrive home**

## **COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)**

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### **Cost**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Cost per Person</b>
Trip Cost, double occupancy	\$13,900
Single Supplement	\$5,000

Costs are per person, double occupancy, not including airfare (except for three internal flights), singles extra. See *Included* and *Not Included* sections for more details.

If you are a single traveler, we will find a roommate for you, but if we cannot find you a roommate, we may charge you a single supplement. Single rooms cost extra and are subject to availability.

### **Payment Schedule**

<b>Payment</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Amount per Person</b>
Deposit	Due now to reserve your space	\$500
Second	July 1, 2022	\$2,000
Final	February 1, 2023	Remaining Balance

Payments are due based on the schedule above. All reservations require a deposit to confirm reservation of your space.

### **Cancellations**

Until the Final Payment due date, deposits are refundable except for a cancellation fee of \$150 per person, which can be applied toward another tour if reserved within six months of the cancelled trip's departure date. Cancellations are non-transferrable. No refunds are given after the Final Payment due date.

### **Included**

- All leaders, transport, park entry fees, vehicles, and boat trips for all activities, unless described as optional.
- Three internal flights.
- Accommodations for the nights of August 6 through August 20.
- Meals from dinner on August 6 through breakfast on August 21.
- Bottled water throughout safari.
- Trip Materials – information about flights, packing, entry and departure requirements, airport transfers, gratuities, etc.

## Not Included

- All airfare (except flight listed as included), airport and departure taxes, and excess baggage fees. Round-trip airfare is approximately \$1,000 to \$1,500 between the US and São Paulo, depending on origin.
- Passport and visa fees.
- Gratuities – tipping is always discretionary. However, we suggest budgeting about \$28 to \$32 per participant per day for August 6 to August 20 with our guides (about \$420 to \$480 total per participant).
- Emergency medical and evacuation insurance and trip cancellation insurance. For more information see [www.cheesemans.com/travel-insurance](http://www.cheesemans.com/travel-insurance).
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone calls, medical costs or hospitalization, room service, soft drinks and alcoholic bottled beverages, items not on the regular menu, etc. If you have special dietary needs, please indicate them on your Reservation Form.

## SIGN UP

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Please contact us first to check availability, reserve your space, and obtain a Reservation Form. To confirm your reservation, we require a deposit and signed form from each participant.

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

Email: [info@cheesemans.com](mailto:info@cheesemans.com)

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## OTHER DETAILS

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### Climate

The Pantanal can be very hot, from 90 to 100+°F (32 to 38+°C), especially during midday and afternoons. The occasional cold snap may blow through, dropping the temperature to the 60s°F (~15 to 20°C), so layer clothes to manage these changing conditions!

### Fitness Level

Most wildlife viewing is done from small boats and vehicles. Walks to search for wildlife are generally less than an hour over relatively flat trails or along the gravel roads.

### Accommodations

All lodges have private baths and air conditioning.

### Transportation

You will travel by air-conditioned private bus, boat, and commercial air. Some remote roads in the Pantanal are unpaved, dusty, and bumpy. Some of the drives between regions are long, between one and five hours, but most of these are on paved, modern roads. The boats are comfortable (the seats have back rests) and are easy to get in and out of. Although the boats have limited space, you have room for your daypack and camera gear near your feet and on your lap.

## Flights

Unless listed as included, airfare is not included in trip costs. Detailed logistical information and the contact information for our recommended flight-ticketing agent are included in the Trip Materials we will send you. Please let us know if you are arriving earlier or staying later as we are happy to assist you with any extra overnights that you might want to arrange.

Flights you (or a travel agent) book: Arrive in São Paulo, Brazil (GRU) early enough to connect with a morning flight to Cuiabá, Brazil (CGB) on August 6. Depart from São Paulo, Brazil (GRU) in the late afternoon or at night on August 21.

Flights we book for you: Three internal flights are included in the trip cost.

## Terms and Conditions

Read our current Terms and Conditions at <https://cheesemans.com/terms-and-conditions>.

## Conservation

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris is passionate about conserving the precious regions that we travel to and supports many conservation efforts. By visiting these areas, we contribute to sustainable conservation of these valuable wildlife habitats. We urge you to support conservation organizations that protect and restore natural habitats and write letters to tourism and government agencies to promote work in preserving wildlife.

We aim to make all our trips carbon neutral by splitting the cost of carbon offsetting with our participants. For your convenience, the optional donation amount for your half of the carbon offset will be indicated on your invoice. We source high quality offsets through CarbonTree Conservation Fund, a non-profit we helped found, supporting pioneering forest conservation in the Rio Bravo Reserve in Belize, a Nature Conservancy project ([www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/latin-america/belize/rio-bravo-conservation-area/](http://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/latin-america/belize/rio-bravo-conservation-area/)).

## FAQS

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### Should I visit the Pantanal or the Amazon to see wildlife?

While the Amazon is much more famous, the Pantanal is **the best** place to see Brazil's wildlife as it has much greater biodiversity and a higher density of that biodiversity. The Pantanal is the world's largest wetland and therefore attracts many large mammals (the Big Five), smaller mammals such as monkeys and capybaras, and many beautiful birds.

### When is the best time to go to the Pantanal?

We visit in July through September during the dry season when wildlife tends to concentrate around the ponds left after the wet season's floods. Fields are now dry, enabling us to hike and drive safari-style through them to look for wildlife. It is also warmer during these months and the coolness of the river entices jaguars to the riverbanks to cool off. July through September are also good months to see plentiful birds.

**Am I guaranteed to see the Pantanal's Big Five – jaguar, giant anteater, giant otter, ocelot, and South American tapir?**

Our goal is to see the Big Five, but we cannot guarantee that we will see them all as wildlife is wild and unpredictable! But to best meet our goal, we spend the maximum time in nature to greatly increase our chance of seeing the Big Five and lots more.

**Why do you spend so much time on rivers in the Pantanal?**

During days near the Cuiabá and other rivers, we spend a lot of time in boats as it is the best way to see jaguar and other wildlife. Wildlife are accustomed to tourist boats and feel safe around them, generally allowing us to approach to watch and photograph them.

**Should I worry about seasickness on the Pantanal's rivers?**

The rivers in this region are calm and we have never had problems with anyone getting seasick.