

## Tour Report

# Brazil's Big Five Photo Safari

25 September – 8 October 2022

Jaguar



Giant river otter



Red-and-green macaw



Giant anteater



Compiled by Emma Healey

A trip including some of Brazil's highlights, trying to find the famous 'Big Five' that can be found in these enormous wetlands. Covering an area of 195,000 square kilometres (or 15 x the size of the Okavango Delta for those who have been to Botswana!), there's a lot of land for the wildlife to cover and we can only access a fraction of it, but the area is teeming with amazing wildlife. This trip visits the famous 'jaguar land' of the North Pantanal, and then travels by boat past the beautiful scenic Amolar Mountains to the south, where the focus is the giant anteater. An 'off the beaten track' visit to Brazil, taking in some incredible sights.

**Day 1: London Heathrow to Cuiaba (via Sao Paulo)**

**Sunday 25 September 2022**

Never the bit anyone looks forward to, but we all met at Heathrow and had a smooth flight to Cuiaba, via Sao Paulo to start the journey. We had to collect our bags in Sao Paulo and transfer to Terminal 2C to check in again for our onward flights (you have to collect luggage at Sao Paulo as it cannot be transferred through for you).

**Day 2: Transfer to Transpantaneira**

**Monday 26 September 2022**

After some heavy rain outside during our stopover in Sao Paulo, we arrived at a hot, sunny, if a little cloudy, Cuiaba. Our guide, Israel, was there to meet us and show us out to the minibus, which then transported us a few minutes down the road to a traditional 'Churrascaria' restaurant for lunch before we set off towards our first lodge.

The first section of the journey is on a tarmac road for around an hour and a half until you reach Pocone - the last town before the Transpantaneira begins. It wasn't long before we left the tarmac behind for the red dirt road stretching out 147 kilometres in front of us. As soon as we passed through the gate (where we stopped for an obligatory photo stop!), the birds began to show themselves, and the caiman were basking in the roadside pools - welcome to the Pantanal!



The area on either side of the Transpantaneira is very popular with wading birds, storks, herons, roseate spoonbills, hawks, caiman and capybaras, to name a few species. We stopped a few times on the way, particularly at the larger lagoons, where there was more activity, to capture some of our first sightings and get to grips with the kit, settings, etc. We then continued our journey south, across numerous bridges, closely followed by heavy storm clouds, which opened up as we were about halfway to the lodge and gave us a refreshing but quite heavy shower! Luckily we had our waterproofs ready, and the tarpaulin for the luggage was a good substitute for those at the back.

Despite trying to keep the stops as short as possible, we arrived at the lodge slightly later than planned due to the storm, and there was a rush to get to the ocelot hide in time. Luckily we just made it in time for a great sighting of the ocelot climbing the branches and eating the food left for it. While we sat there we were also visited by a crab-eating fox and a marsh deer, which was a nice surprise. After the visitors had left, we returned to the lodge for a much-needed dinner and an early night.



### Day 3: Transpantaneira

Tuesday 27 September 2022

This morning started with an early pre-breakfast walk out on the roads by the lodge to make the best of the light when the wildlife is most active. We were treated to views of various bird species, including vermilion flycatcher, cachalote, kiskadees and various hawks looking for breakfast. We were conscious of some quite dark stormy clouds above us, so as the light began to fade, we walked back towards the lodge. As we approached the grounds, a crab-eating fox was suddenly coming towards us on the road. Thinking it would be spooked and retreat, we stopped and got as low as possible to the ground. Instead of going the other way, intrigued, it started trotting towards us. Its sense (fear?) got the better of it in the end, and it ducked into a bush and disappeared, but only after we got some lovely photos of it – what a lovely opportunity!



After breakfast, we left the lodge to explore more of the area on foot - starting our walk along the river and then into the bush past the ocelot hide. A beautiful walk along a winding path through the scrub provided plenty of sightings and photo opportunities, including pale-headed and little woodpeckers, a nunbird, a squirrel cuckoo and some Amazon kingfishers. After a long, hot walk, we decided we would rather not walk back, so we were collected by a motor boat and driven back to the lodge, stopping briefly en route to see some storks and herons hunting in the shallow water.

There's so much wildlife to see around the lodge, so during the late morning and early afternoon, and the group was encouraged to explore the lodge gardens, download images or rest. We spent a lot of time around the small trees and the riverside, where you can often find bar-faced curassows, red-capped, crested and yellow-billed cardinals, saffron finches and more, as well as kingfishers perching to see what to fish next. This is also a perfect time to investigate the smaller species, so some of us photographed jumping spiders, damselflies and leafhoppers on the leaves of the bushes around the lodge.



Mid-afternoon, we were back out for a boat trip on the Pixaim River. Split across two boats, we meandered slowly along the river. We stopped for various water birds, including Amazon and ringed kingfishers, rufous tiger, striated, coqui and boat-billed herons, wood rails, and a large group of capybara and a couple of jabiru storks, who let us get some lovely portrait shots. There were a couple of photo opportunities, including a black-collared hawk swooping in to grab a fish, so we made the most of that before heading back to the lodge.



We returned with enough time to grab some layers and bug spray and then head to the ocelot hide for another chance to see them. As we sat down, the wind picked up and continued to blow quite strongly, which unfortunately seemed to affect the ocelot and other wildlife, and sadly it didn't make an appearance, which was a real shame – but that's wildlife! We returned to the lodge for dinner and an early night before our early start the next morning.

**Day 4: Transpantaneira - Porto Jofre - Jaguar Land**

**Wednesday 28 September 2022**

This morning it was time to return to the Transpantaneira and head south towards Porto Jofre. The lodge is about halfway down the road, so we had another 70 kilometres to go this morning.

The forecast was for heavy rain, so everyone was prepared with their waterproof gear, but luckily it stayed relatively dry, with the sun breaking through every so often. With a long drive ahead, we continued steadily, stopping if there were things to see, particularly at some of the larger roadside pools full of egrets, herons, caiman, capybara and waders.



We reached Porto Jofre late morning and had time for a quick stop to see a group of hyacinth macaws and some crested caracaras before boarding our boat, which would be our only mode of transport for the next few days. On arrival at Porto Jofre, we met Julia, who would accompany us for the next few days. Julia is a biologist who has spent this season studying and recording the jaguars as the resident naturalist while also running the flotel, so it was great to have her there to help us identify the cats and provide more information.

Our lodge was just over an hour up the river, so it was full speed ahead to get there and have some lunch before heading out in search of the river wildlife in the afternoon. About halfway to the lodge, we saw three boats stopped by the side of the river, so we slowed down and got our first glimpse of a spotty coat lying in the shade of a fallen tree. Unfortunately, the jaguar had been there for a while and didn't look as though it would be moving any time soon, so we decided to continue to check in and have some lunch. We spotted our only chestnut-eared aracari of the trip as we arrived at the jetty. We hoped we'd see more, but it was a very nice welcome to the lodge.

This afternoon we boarded one of two boats and set off on our first proper exploration of the Three Brothers riverways. A great variety of herons, storks, kingfishers and capybaras welcomed us. The rivers are lined with patches of water hyacinth, which, while looking pretty, provide shelter and food for smaller birds, such as wattled jacana, black-backed and white-headed tyrants and black-capped donacobius.

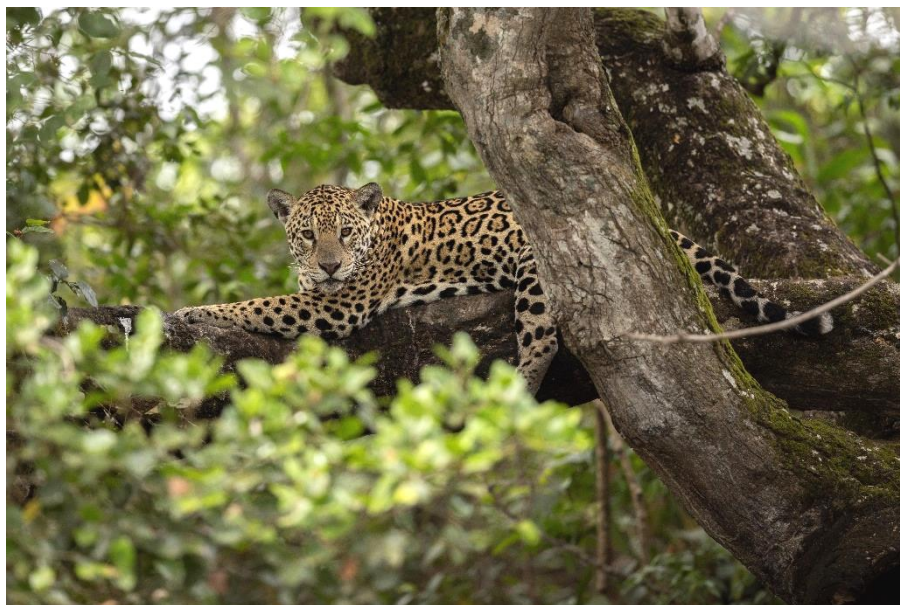


She got out of the river into some thick bush and tried to catch a capybara, but the capybara was alert and jumped into the river alarm calling to alert everyone of her presence, so she stayed hidden (unfortunately for us!). Travelling south along the rivers, we passed many small birds going about their business around the banks and some savannah and roadside hawks perching on branches and tree trunks, keeping an eye on things. Higher in the trees are various troops of howler monkeys, so we stopped a few times for these when the light was better, but unfortunately, the sky was quite foreboding. Therefore the light wasn't great for images of anything above us.

As we came back to the lodge and settled in for dinner, the rain that had been threatening all afternoon fell; thankfully, we could watch it from inside.

Today was our first full day searching for jaguars and giant river otters on the river system. Leaving the lodge early to the sound of the resident yellow-rumped caciques and monk parakeets, we set off under some cloudy skies. Making our way south on the Three Brothers River, we passed the usual feathered residents - herons, storks and smaller passerines.

After some time, we came across a family of giant river otters - our first good sighting of them very close to the boat, so everyone was excited. Typically, just as we found them, we had a call over the radio that a jaguar had been spotted on the Black Channel – not very far away. We decided to spend a few minutes with the otters and then head to the jaguar, which was reportedly resting in a tree. One of our group's boats was there earlier and managed to see her (Stella) walking along the beach before she jumped into the tree for an afternoon nap. When we arrived, she was still resting, so we could get into a good position and get some lovely views of her lying on the branch. In the end, she got up and crossed the river to reunite with her mother and brother (Amber and Woody).



After a wonderful session with the cats, it was time to head back towards the lodge, and as we joined the Three Brothers River, we spotted the otters, still in a similar position and all playing by the shore, so both boats were able to spend some time watching them. They were close to their den and spent some time marking their territory in their latrine and interacting with each other, so it was a lovely sighting.



And we weren't done yet! On our way back to the lodge, we suddenly saw a large male jaguar swimming across the river and exiting. Unfortunately, he very quickly disappeared into the branches, so there were no photos, but a lovely sighting to take our total up to six.

Lunchtime at the lodge was free for everyone to relax, catch up on sleep, edit photos or explore. The lodge grounds are fantastic for birds, and there is a wide variety of species, both resident and visiting, so there's always something to see and photograph. The yellow-rumped caciques and monk parakeets were nesting outside the outdoor rooms, and some cachalots were bringing nesting materials to their nest outside the lodge's main entrance. Guira cuckoos appeared to like the sandy areas outside the terrace to catch grasshoppers, so if you were quick, you could get an image of them before they flew off with their food!



It was still quite cloudy this afternoon, and a little drizzle was sneaking through, but unperturbed, we boarded the boat to explore a new river. A lovely narrow route with water hyacinths on either side provided many opportunities to spot birds and caiman. Opening out into the Cuiaba River, we spotted some howler monkeys, but unfortunately, the light wasn't in our favour, so we continued. We came across a beach full of yellow-billed terns and skimmers just as the light began to improve, so we spent some time capturing images of them in flight and coming into land. The light lasted long enough for us to get some lovely shots of a group of capybara and caiman on a small island before exploring another channel. Unfortunately, there were no jaguars to be found this afternoon, but we saw a wide variety of bird species, lots of caiman and one boat found a small family of river otters just before they reached the lodge, which was a lovely way to end the day.

This evening, after dinner, Julia gave the group a talk about jaguars, their biology, relationships to other cats and behaviour in the area.

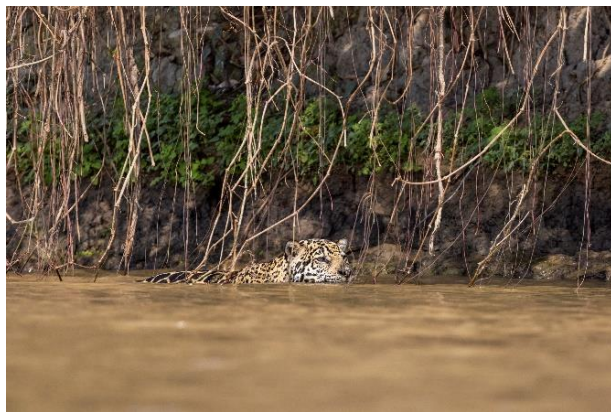
## Day 5: Jaguar Land

Friday 30 September 2022

This morning we went back out along the beautiful river from the lodge leading directly to the Cuiaba River. We stopped for a few birds, including a crane hawk, a squirrel cuckoo and a great black hawk, black-collared hawk, and our first capuchin monkeys in a tree. As we reached the end of the channel, we turned the corner and slowly approached our other boat, which was stopped up ahead and saw them pointing up into a large tree. It took us a while to spot it, but there was a porcupine high up in the branches that the boat driver had spotted. It was happy up there but turned a couple of times to show its face before snuggling down again for a nap. What a treat!



We reached Cuiaba River and headed south to see what we could find. After a while, the boat sped up and approached a jaguar in the river next to the bank. Then we spotted another. Then a third! Julia informed us it was Ryan and her two older cubs, Juliette and Ophelia (about 18 months old). After a couple of minutes around the bank, Ryan and Ophelia swam across the river, but after a couple of attempts, Juliette decided to stay on the other side. The other two swam on upstream, against the current, clearly looking for food. Ophelia dropped back to call for her sister, so we left her in case the boats discouraged Juliette, and we continued to follow Ryan as she swam upstream until she disappeared into the undergrowth. We spent around an hour with these beautiful cats in and out of the water, so it was a very good morning.



At lunch, some of the group went for a walk around the grounds after lunch. Species seen included an Amazon pygmy owl and a variety of other birds, including a variegated red woodpecker, a pale-headed woodpecker and guira cuckoo, and some Ameiva ameiva lizards, which moved far too quickly for anyone to photograph.

The sun began to break through the clouds as we left for our afternoon boat trip. After a few cloudy days, seeing how the sunlight changed scenery and subjects was a treat. After all - photography is all about the light!

We went down towards the Black Channel, where Stella was reportedly resting under a tree in the shade. While we were waiting to see if she would move, there was a lot of activity in the water hyacinth with dragonflies, damselflies and jumping spiders to keep us entertained. She did finally move, but only to walk away from the river. We slowly meandered back down the channel towards the Three Brothers River, past the usual onlookers, including some broad-billed anis.







On our way back to the lodge, we went down a small channel to see the great potoo (they tend to nest in the same spot each day), and we found it, but it was looking the other way, so not the best model! We stopped to photograph some fishing bats nesting in a row on the tree as we were leaving the channel.

This evening after dinner, Julia talked about the giant river otters and explained some of the behaviours we'd observed yesterday at the latrines. After the talk, Emma took those keen outside to photograph some scorpions with the UV torch – with the added challenge of dodging the cane toads, which liked to spend time on the terrace eating the flies drawn in by the lights.



## Day 6: Jaguar Land

Saturday 1 October 2022

It was a gorgeous start weatherwise this morning, and some of the group started with a walk up the airstrip. A beautiful mist rose from the marshes, and we had our first real sunrise of the trip without too many clouds, casting a beautiful red light on the area. A screamer and a donicobius provided some nice photographic opportunities, and then it was back to the lodge for breakfast before leaving for our morning boat trip.

This morning, the strong sunshine meant we needed to start discussing underexposing to prevent too much contrast, as the light was quite harsh quickly. Within a few minutes of leaving the lodge, we came across a small group of three otters - the mother was very keen to keep the young one with her, but it had other ideas, and she spent a while chasing it around, shouting to try and encourage it to go with her, which was quite amusing for us to watch!

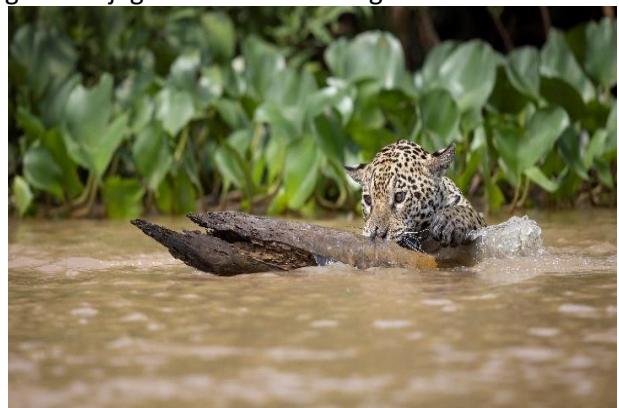
On our way down the river, we stopped for a few things as we passed, including iguanas resting on a tree soaking up the sunshine, howler monkeys enjoying their breakfast and a roadside hawk sunning itself on top of a tree.



After a while, we arrived at the black channel to find Stella again, resting in the shade under a tree by the water. She moved a couple of times and popped her head out, but it wasn't easy to get any good images. There were many boats, so we decided to move on to see if we could find anything else. As we approached the black channel, we spotted some movement in the grass, and a large-collared male (known as Nels) was walking through the water hyacinth. He stopped a couple of times to scent mark and then continued along the bank towards where Stella was lying. As he approached her, she got spooked and left the safety of the shade, deciding to swim across the river to the other side, and she disappeared into the undergrowth.



We started back up the San Laurencio River, and after a few minutes, the boat in front suddenly slowed down, and a young male jaguar was swimming. He swam along the bank looking for a place to rest, but unfortunately for it (and us!), only a few branches were loose in the river. Despite its best efforts, it couldn't get any purchase on them and had to retreat onto the bank and into the undergrowth, but not before he had posed for a few photos as he swam along. Three jaguars in one morning!



About 10 minutes before leaving the lodge for our afternoon boat trip, I spotted a hyacinth macaw in the tree outside the outdoor rooms, close to where the monk parakeets and yellow-rumped caciques were nesting. I grabbed as many of the group as possible so that they could get some photographs before it flew off into the marshland.

It was time to return to the boats and make our way south. Going down the channel towards the Laurencio River, we passed the regular mix of caiman, capybara and small birds, and we stopped for a capped heron in the low branches.



The rivers were quiet this afternoon and we passed a number of large and small birds, including a jabiru stork collecting nesting materials and a stunning male green kingfisher. On the way back up the river we explored a shallow channel we hadn't been down before at a very slow pace when the light was lovely and warm. A couple of Jacamars, a family of curassows, squirrel cuckoo, kiskadees, tyrants and sandpiper were some of the inhabitants we saw and photographed. We passed a couple of beaches that had evidence of jaguar visits recently and on one we got off to investigate the paw prints.

The lights was stunning this afternoon and there was some beautiful warm light leading us back to the lodge. We came across a water buffalo enjoying the cooling shallow waters on the edge of the river. The two boats travelled the last section back to the lodge on different channels and one boat managed to spot a jaguar on the Cachiri channel, which then caught a small caiman. The light was not great, but it was a fantastic way to end the day.

This evening Julia very kindly gave us two presentations, as it was our final night and we couldn't choose between caiman and capybara! It's a lovely way to learn about these species as you're in their habitat.

## Day 7: Jaguar Land to Amolar

Sunday 2 October 2022

It was an early start this morning - breakfast at 05:00 and leaving the lodge by 05:30 to make our way south. Accompanied by beautiful morning light, we made our final journey down the channel to the Three Brothers River, stopping briefly for a pair of plumbeous ibis and caiman in the lovely golden morning light.

We reached Porto Jofre after around two hours and got off to stretch our legs and see if we could photograph the hyacinth macaws. Luckily there were two very willing models, so we spent around half an hour with them, preening and posing for us. Once everyone had got some shots, we got back on the boat, and it was time for the long journey south. Our priority was to get to our next stop but to stop for any good wildlife we spotted. We stopped briefly for a night heron, and then soon after, we had an unexpected bonus jaguar (male) walking through a clearing briefly before disappearing into the undergrowth. These boat drivers clearly have x-ray vision!



After this, the boat continued southwards on the Paraguay River, and we began to see the landscape change, with hills rising in the distance out of the previously flat marshland. Travelling along the river we were accompanied by various herons and storks and passed some beaches crowded by cormorants, skimmers and terns, providing some opportunities for in-flight shots.



Unfortunately, we were delayed getting to our accommodation due to confusion among the boat drivers, so everyone was ready for a shower and beer by the campfire. It had been a long day in the boat. Luckily the lodge was situated on the edge of the marshes, overlooking the Amolar Mountains, and we had a wonderful sunset.

The lodge's owner is also the head vet on a project to help conservation in the area since the devastating fires of 2020 that wiped out around 90% of flora and fauna. He talked us through the progress made with rewilding the area, the challenges they face, and the time it will take to return the area to anything near what it was.

## Day 8: Amolar to Bonito

Monday 3 October 2022

After enjoying the beautiful sunrise over the mountains this morning, we left Acurizal and came across our first sighting of some red macaws high on the trees, and a small hawk flew overhead. Continuing along the river, the scenery was stunning, with hills on our right and sun rays breaking through the clouds on our left.

After a while, Manuel spotted some movement ahead, and we steered to the bank, where a family of giant river otters was on the edge of the river. They had a fairly young one, so they took it back inside the den, and in case we were predators, they began to try and confuse us by going in and out of different holes into the den and swimming along the bank to lead us away from where they baby was safely stowed. It was fascinating behaviour to watch. One even posed nicely for us on the bank before returning to one of the entrances.



We made a slight detour in search of some of the famous lily pads, but unfortunately, due to a lack of rain, the area they were in was dry, and they had gone into stasis until the rain returned. After a brief stop to drop off the owner of the Fazenda, we were on our way. After a cloudy start, the sun was strong, and the breeze from the moving boat was very welcome.

A few hours later, we arrived in Corumba on to very welcome dry land, saying farewell to our drivers Manoel and Junio, and went into town to stretch our legs and have some lunch.

After lunch, we transferred by road to Bonito, which took around four hours, so people had time to relax, read or nap.

After a long couple of days travelling, we were all very grateful to arrive at the beautiful lodge in Bonito, where we had some dinner and went to bed.

### **Day 9: Bonito**

**Tuesday 4 October 2022**

The way activities work in Bonito is very different to what we were used to from the first parts of the trip. Heading out from the lodge in an air-conditioned minibus with tinted windows helps to keep cool, but you're unable to do any photography from the vehicle. The priority for this morning was anteaters, but unfortunately, the sun was strong early, and we didn't find any where the guide thought they would be, so we decided to head back to the lodge and try in the afternoon.

As we got back for breakfast at 09:00, there was a good part of the day free to explore the lodge grounds and relax, and some decided to dip in the pool. There was a huge variety of birds around, including toucans, tanagers and parakeets, and our first good sighting of an aguti, which lived in the woods at the edge of the hotel grounds.

We left the lodge in the minibus again at 15:15 and drove back towards the area we had searched this morning. What a difference a few hours makes! After about 5 minutes, we reached the turning, and there was our first anteater - a youngish male. Getting closer to an anteater is a little like photographing deer in the UK (for anyone who does that!). We left the van and walked around the anteater quietly to avoid it smelling us in the wind. Their sight is quite poor, so they rely on their sense of smell from whatever comes towards them; you need to ensure that the wind doesn't carry your scent in their direction.



We managed to get some lovely shots of him drinking and tried to walk around him, but the wind changed, and he went into the bushes. He had a slight limp, so it was likely he had stepped on a palm leaf, but Israel said it should come out on its own. He also explained that males have more black on their front legs, whereas females have more white and a solid black bracelet around their ankle.

Next, we saw two females who caught our scent fairly quickly. As we turned the corner at an open field, we spotted a female eating from the termite mounds, so we parked up and walked around her so that the wind and light were just right. Luckily she was an excellent model and enabled us to get many images of her. Ultimately, she was so close it was too close for some of our lenses! As they eat around 40,000 ants or termites per day, they're exploring the termite mounds for quite a long time, which gave us time to photograph her in various positions.



After around 45 minutes, we left her and walked further along the road to see if we could spot any more. Three were spotted in the distance but the wrong way for the light and wind, so we left them and entered the field to our right, where there were some burrowing owls. We spotted another female walking behind the cattle (which we had to steer clear of), so we tracked her while taking photos of the burrowing owls in the lovely evening light. She came across into a field behind, and we got some shots of her in the last light of the day before heading back to the lodge. Eight anteaters in less than three hours – we considered it to be a very successful afternoon.

This evening a few of us explored the hotel grounds with our macro lenses. There were various species around, but a cicada emerging from its exoskeleton was particularly interesting. We revisited it a few times during and after dinner to watch and photograph its progression, which was fascinating.



## Day 10: Bonito

Wednesday 5 October 2022

Due to the successful activity in the afternoon yesterday, we decided to change our plans and focus on anteaters in the afternoons. So, this morning some of the group went on a guided walk at Rio do Prata - a farm where they have several conservation projects, including planting trees, rewilding the area and working with some important species such as hyacinth macaws. We were greeted on arrival by a red-legged seriema posing nicely for us and some red and green macaws, but with heavy clouds in the sky, the light was challenging. After signing in and meeting our guide, we were transported around 10 minutes to the start of the trails by the river just as the heavens opened.

After sheltering from a heavy storm for a while, we boarded a solar-powered boat and floated down the beautifully clear river, where we could see several different fish species and some green and ringed kingfishers. As we ambled along the river, the sun started to come out and showed us the beautiful colours of the forest and the crystal waters, where we could see the fish swimming alongside the boat. After disembarking the boat at a platform where the two rivers meet, we walked through the forest, stopping to see and photograph birds, bugs and fungi. It was lovely to experience a rainforest climate as a stark contrast to the hot, dry farmland where we spent the afternoons. One of our more exciting sightings was a blue-crowned trogon – not great for photos, but a lovely species to see. After being transported back to the main entrance, we spent more time photographing the scarlet macaws, plush crested jays and peacocks before heading back to the lodge for lunch and a rest.



This afternoon we returned to the farmland around 10 minutes from the lodge. Unfortunately, the wind was much stronger than the previous day, affecting the animals' behaviour as our smell was carried around much more easily. Our first sighting was a rhea walking along the tree line with 6-8 young chicks. Unfortunately, the light was far from ideal, so we continued after a quick stop to see them and take some snaps. We spotted an anteater in a field to our left, so we edged towards it, trying to avoid letting it smell us. As we advanced, we realised that she had a baby on her back and that there was a male slightly further across the field. Unfortunately, she was particularly sensitive as she protected the young one, so her senses heightened. She became aware of our presence early on and retreated into the bush. We waited to see if she would reappear, but she seemed happy foraging in the undergrowth, so we left her to it and moved on.





We came across another four or five at varying distances from us, but all seemed more sensitive than the previous day. We managed to get close enough to one or two for some good shots, but as the light faded, we decided to return to the lodge.

This evening a few of us explored the grounds of the hotel again after dark with our macro lenses as it came to life with various species after dark.



#### Day 11: Bonito to Campo Grande

Thursday 6 October 2022

It was an early start today, and it was time to bid farewell to the lovely lodge and its wildlife. We drove towards Jardim and the sinkhole at Buraco D'Araras. On arrival, we were met by our guide for the morning, who gave us an overview of what we might see and showed us the trail we'd be taking that passes two platforms at either end of the sinkhole, which is around 500 metres in diameter and 100 metres deep. Estimated to be one of the highest concentrations of scarlet macaws in the reproductive period, with about 120 individuals, we had many opportunities to photograph these beautiful birds with varying backgrounds. Starting early allowed us to get the sun on the birds while the bottom of the sinkhole was in the shade, so there were options to be more creative once everyone had the initial shots. It was slow to start with, but then the number flying around the sinkhole increased, which was great for everyone looking to improve their 'in-flight' shots.



As well as red and green macaws, several buff-necked ibis have made nests in the walls and flew around the edge. Our guide also spotted a caiman and spectacled owl at the bottom of the sinkhole - an amazing spot and not one for photographs but exciting to see. The walk around the area to the second platform and then back to the main area also allowed us to see some other birds, such as toco toucans, various species of parakeets, a Chaco puffbird and a mot mot. There were several insects for macro fans too, so we had lots to keep us entertained. The forecast had been for rain, so we were pleasantly surprised to have good morning weather, which helped everyone get the shots they wanted.



Saying goodbye to the forest areas, we started to make our way towards Campo Grande – a journey of around three to four hours. We stopped for lunch en route and continued onwards, checking into our hotel mid-afternoon.

We checked in, and everyone was offered the opportunity to visit the Avenue de Macaws – a main road on the edge of Campo Grande, where three different species of macaws have made their nests in some dead palm tree trunks. A few of us went there, but after about five minutes, a very badly-timed sandstorm unleashed itself on us. We managed to see blue and yellow and red-bellied macaws, but then had to retreat to the hotel to shelter from the storm.



We had a final dinner in the hotel and then went to bed to prepare for the journey home.

**Day 12: Return UK**

**Friday 7 October 2022**

This morning it was time to say goodbye to Brazil, with a quick breakfast and an early flight to Sao Paulo to connect with our onward flight home.