Argentina & Brazil

Iguazú & the Pantanal

Bird Photo Tour



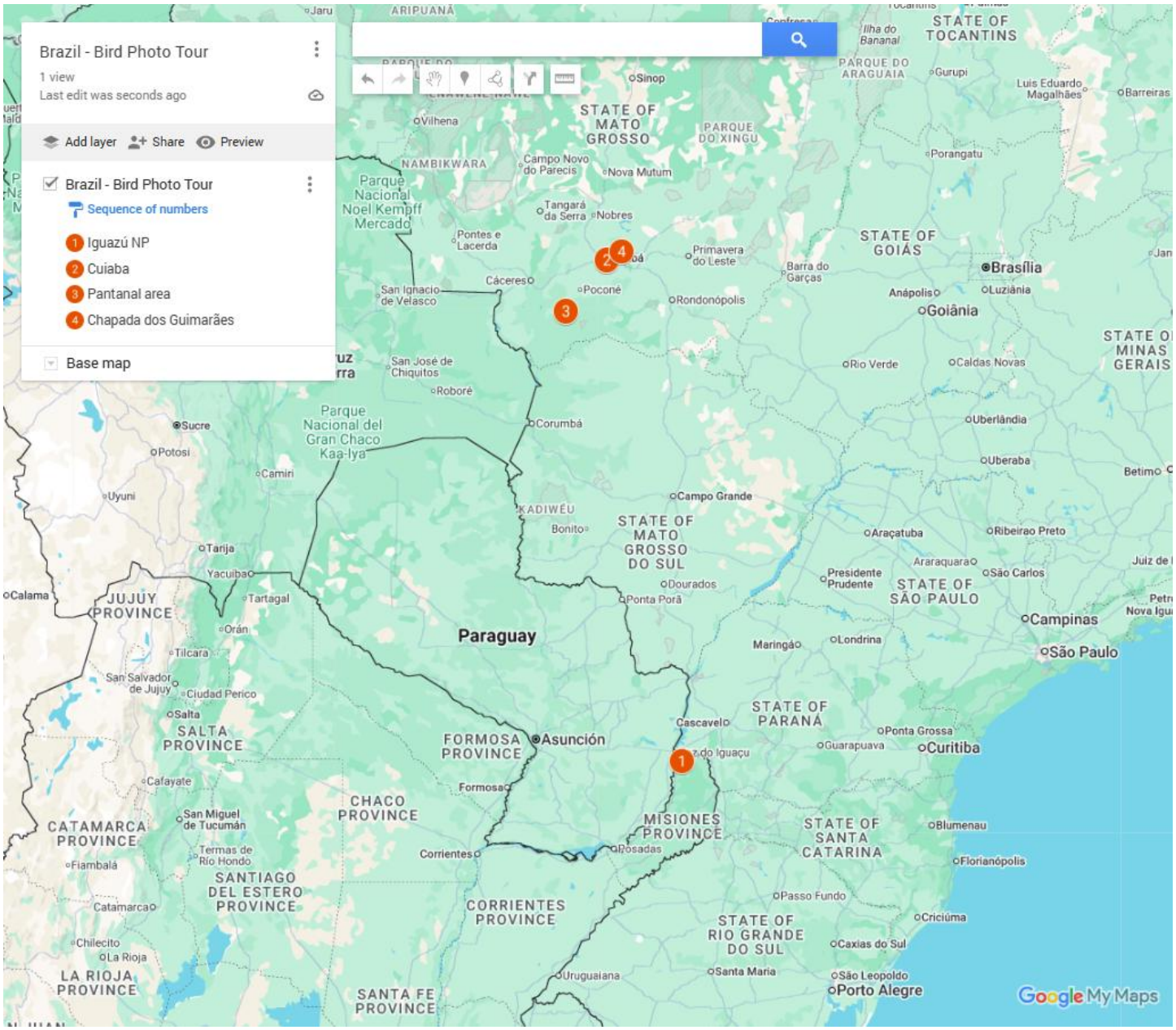
Sunbittern by Dušan Brinkhuizen

Brazil, one of the most biodiverse countries on the planet, is a dream destination for general naturalists, photographers, and birders alike. Home to swathes of Amazon Rainforest, the vast majority of the continent's savannah and endemic-rich Atlantic Rainforest, and the highly celebrated Pantanal, few destinations can offer such great variety and abundance in such a short space of time.

Combining a visit to two of these great regions - the Pantanal, weighing in as the world's largest freshwater wetland, and the Cerrado, a true icon of Brazil's fascinating habitats - our main tour packs in an incomparable mix of superb photography opportunities, productive birding, and great wildlife-viewing. Indeed, sampling a fantastic cross-section of the Pantanal's 250 000km² (96 500mi²) of woodland, swathing rivers, and shallow wetlands, on top of the bird rich Cerrado in the Chapada dos Guimarães area, our 14-day itinerary is quite simply an unbeatable foray into the photographic wonders of this prolific area.

Our tour also visits the incredible Iguazú Falls, which offers not only a visit to the most voluminous and arguably most scenic falls in the world, but also several days of fantastic bird photography. We will visit hummingbird feeders and enjoy the sheer variety of approachable species around the falls themselves, which includes some wonderful Atlantic Rainforest Endemics.

Itinerary & Map



Itinerary Outline

Day 1	**Arrival in Foz do Iguaçu (Brazil), transfer to Iguazú Falls (Argentina)**
Days 2 to 4	**Iguazú Falls & surrounds (Argentina)**
Day 5	**Iguazú Falls to Foz do Iguaçu; flight to Cuiaba & transfer to the Pantanal**
Days 6 to 10	**Pantanal area**
Day 11	**Pantanal area to Chapada dos Guimaraes**
Days 12 & 13	**Chapada dos Guimaraes area**
Day 14	**Chapada dos Guimaraes to Cuiaba & final departure**

Highlights

- ***Seeing and experiencing Iguazú Falls and exploring the grand network of trails and viewpoints that criss-cross this incredible protected area***
- ***Visit feeders that provide fabulous opportunities to photograph many of the regions endemic and special birds***
- ***This itinerary offers the very best chances of photographing one of South America's most iconic big cats - the Jaguar***
- ***Exploring one of the greatest wetlands on the planet - the vast Pantanal***
- ***Opportunities to see and photograph a variety of Brazil's most celebrated wildlife including South American Tapir, Giant Anteater, Giant River Otter, Hyacinth Macaw, Red-legged Seriema, and Sunbittern***
- ***Boat trips along various rivers, backwaters and oxbow lakes where the photographic opportunities are exceptional.***

Sites in detail

Iguazú National Park. Iguazú National Park protects the vast majority of one of the most important natural forests south of the Amazon: the Interior Atlantic Forest, hosting dozens of unique, often rare, orchids, small primates, bats and birds - many of which are also endemic. Within the park, the Iguazú River plummets 70 meters into a stunning canyon below, in a curtain of cascades spanning more than 250 individual waterfalls and an impressive 2 kilometres! We have 3 full days to enjoy both the falls and the forest within the park to their fullest, by strolling a good selection of the park's myriad of trails and walkways, and by paying a visit to several spectacularly perched lookouts along the way.

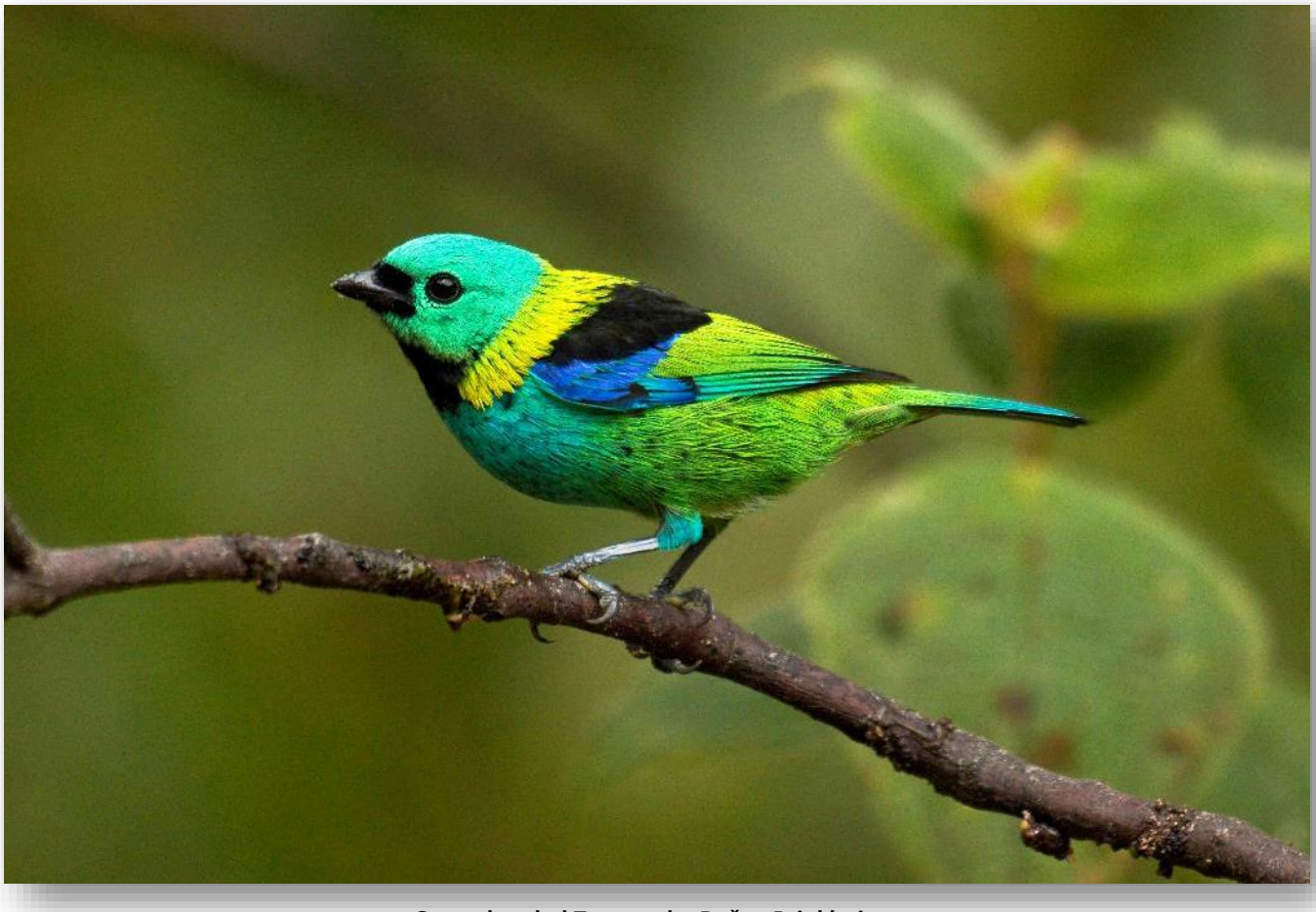


Iguazú Falls by Glen Valentine

The walkways have been built at several different levels, allowing visitors a chance to see the falls from both above and below. A narrow-gauge train also allows visitors to access several different areas, most notably the most spectacular fall of them all – the Devil's Throat, which we will certainly pay a visit to at some point. Along the forest trails on the other hand, a myriad of colourful birds living in Iguazú will be the primary focus of our attention. Many of these species often provide fantastic opportunities for photographs including the stunning Surucua and Black-throated Trogons, Red-ruffed Fruitcrow, Blue Manakin, five species of euphonia, Black-goggled and Green-headed Tanagers, White-eyed and Ochre-breasted Foliage Gleaners, Green-billed and Toco Toucans, Spot-billed Toucanets, Southern Antpipit, Spot-backed and Tufted Antshrikes, Maroon-bellied Parakeet, Scaly-headed Parrot, Short-tailed Antthrush and Rufous-capped Motmot - all of which are quite commonly found.

Less commonly encountered species that we may also find include Black-billed Scythebill, Solitary Tinamou, Spot-winged Wood Quail, Buff-bellied Puffbird, Rusty-breasted Nunlet and Rufous-thighed Kite and several of the twelve species of woodpecker known to occur in the area.

Urugua-i Provincial Park. On one day, we will endeavour to visit this park sitting adjacent to Iguazú but based at a slightly higher elevation and containing some very interesting sections of bamboo-dominated forest. There, away from the crowd of Iguazú, we will have the chance to explore more trails. The photography here is a little more challenging than at Iguazu Falls but some nice opportunities exist for several rarer species while plenty of subjects will still be more than willing to pose for pictures. Some of the species we may find include Bertoni's and Dusky-tailed Antbirds, White-throated Spadebill, Speckle-breasted Antpitta, Mottle-cheeked Tyrannulet, Southern Bristle-Tyrant, Drab-breasted Bamboo Tyrant, Southern Antpipit and even Green-crowned Plovercrest if luck is on our side.



Green-headed Tanager by Dušan Brinkhuizen

The riverine forest along the Uruzú River also provides excellent birding and photography and is one of the better locations to lookout for the sought-after Black-fronted Piping Guan, Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper and Riverbank Warbler. Other species include the obvious Squirrel Cuckoo, White-eyed and Maroon-bellied Parakeets, Ochre-collared Piculet, Grey-bellied Spinetail, Black-capped, White-eyed, Ochre-breasted and Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaners, Plain Antvireo, Sibilant Syristes, Blue Manakin, Black-tailed Tityra, Eastern Slaty and White-necked Thrushes, Chestnut-headed, Swallow and Guira Tanagers, Chestnut-vented Conebill, Red-crowned Ant Tanager, and Blackish-blue Seedeater. The scarce Green-chinned Euphonia is also possible as is Black Hawk-Eagle while the rare Greenish Tyrannulet is a resident in Urugua-í, and our chances of seeing it are particularly good.

Puerto Iguazú. Finally, near our base in Puerto Iguazú we will take time to visit a private house where hummingbird feeders normally attract at least seven species of these flying jewels at any given moment! This naturally provides for plenty of excitement and some wonderful photo opportunities, sometimes even on natural perches and in flight. Black Jacobin, Planalto Hermit, Swallow-tailed Hummingbird, White-throated Hummingbird, Gilded Sapphire and Violet-capped Woodnymph being among the most desired but also often joined by Bananaquit, Green-headed and Sayaca Tanagers, Blue Dacnis, and Purple-throated and Violaceous Euphonias.



Hyacinth Macaw by Dušan Brinkhuizen

The Pantanal. The Pantanal, a huge, gently sloping basin that seasonally inundates with water runoff from the surrounding highlands, is by no means a monotonous expanse of water. Instead, it is a mosaic of woodland, slow-moving waterways, and thousands of drying water pools in the dry season. En route through its northern end, we'll make stops to admire our views of this fascinating landscape and all the birds and animals that gather in sight of the road.

We should see our first stately Jabiru (often offering excellent photographic opportunities), Ringed and Amazon Kingfishers, the attractive Scarlet-headed Blackbird, Rufescent Tiger Heron, Savanna Hawk, Wood Stork, Snail Kite, Greater Rhea, Grey-necked Wood Rails and Guira Cuckoos, among an impressive assortment of other waterfowl and bank-loads of Yacare Caiman. We will be on the lookout for Red-legged Seriema, Sunbittern and several of the area's less common species, including Maguari Stork, Least Bittern and Chotoy Spinetail.

Combining several boat rides, easy walks along forested trails and a return trip along the entire length of the Transpantaneira, we will sample the full suite of avian gems that call the Pantanal home, not to mention give ourselves the best chance of seeing some of its greatest mammal attractions.

Along the Claro and Cuiba Rivers, for example, we have a decent chance of connecting with both Agami and Zigzag Herons, all five Brazilian kingfishers, the often-inconspicuous Sungrebe and the spectacular Sunbittern, on top of regular sightings of Great Black Hawk, several parrot species, Nacunda and Band-tailed Nighthawks and Pale-legged Hornero.



Turquoise-fronted Amazon by Bobby Wilcox

Naturally, our best chances of seeing Giant River Otter and even the biggest prize of them all, the Jaguar, will be from boats along these rivers, particularly the Cuiaba. Indeed, we will dedicate several boat trips in the Porto Jofre area to finding these magnificent beasts, drawn to the river shores by a seasonal abundance of prey - mostly Yacare Caiman and Capybara!

We will thoroughly cover the other extensive habitats of the Pantanal by accessing them from three separate lodges along the Transpantaneira. One of our lodges is located along a narrow river full of wildlife, currently considered one of the best spots for birding and nature photography in the entire Pantanal. Among the regular visitors to the lodge grounds are Grey-necked Wood Rail, Bare-faced Curassow, Chestnut-bellied Guan, Chestnut-eared Aracari, Toco Toucan, Turquoise-fronted Amazon, White-eyed and Yellow-chevroned Parakeets, Golden-collared and Hyacinth Macaws which even nest near the rooms, Crimson-crested and Pale-

crested Woodpeckers, Great Rufous Woodcreeper, Red-billed Scythebill, Rufous-tailed Jacamar, Saffron Finch, Silver-beaked Tanager and many more! Mammals commonly seen here include Azara's (Hooded) Capuchin, Black-and-gold Howler Monkey, South American Coati, Azara's Agouti and Paca.

A quiet canoe trip along the river may herald Cocoi and Agami Herons, Sungrebe, Sunbittern, Black-collared Hawk, all five species of South American Kingfisher, Black-capped Donacobius, Yellow-billed Cardinal, as well as Yacare Cayman and Giant Otters.

Time spent on the trails may produce Blue-throated Piping Guan, Buff-bellied Hermit, Blue-crowned Trogon, White-wedged Piculet, Planalto Slaty Antshrike, Large-billed Antwren, Mato Grosso Antbird, White-lored Spinetail, Southern Antpipit, Stripe-necked and Pearly-vented Tody-Tyrants, White-eyed Attila, White-naped Xenopsaris, Helmeted and Band-tailed Manakins, Green-backed Becard, Hooded and Grey-headed Tanagers, Flavescent Warbler, Rusty-collared Seedeater, Orange-backed Troupial, and Scarlet-headed Blackbird, just to name a few!



Jaguar by Glen Valentine

Wooded areas will be searched for Plain Inezia, Rusty-fronted Tody-Flycatcher, Forest Elaenia, Moustached Wren, Golden-green Woodpecker and Narrow-billed Woodcreeper, whilst some of the birding is made much easier by the abundance of feeders, which offer up point-blank views of Nanday Parakeet, Saffron Finch and even Chestnut-bellied Guan, which can often be seen feeding in impressive numbers. The haunting calls of Undulated Tinamou will no doubt greet us daily, though laying eyes on one shall present a rather greater challenge.

Along the Transpantaneira Road itself we will search for the fantastic Hyacinth Macaw, perhaps the grandest and most striking of all the world's parrots, whilst the rest of our time along the dirt track and its over one hundred narrow bridges where we will keep our eyes out for the migrant Maguari Stork, King Vulture, Cinereous-breasted Spinetail, Southern Screamer, Boat-billed Heron, White-wedged Piculet and White-tailed Goldenthroat. The waterbird spectacle is truly something to behold, and we will also dedicate more time to observing the nesting and feeding sites of a variety of herons, spoonbills and storks, all providing for unparalleled photography to boot.



Chestnut-bellied Guan by Bobby Wilcox

Mammals, aside from the aforementioned Jaguar and Giant Otters, are also a prominent feature of the Transpantaneira, where many are easier to see than any other place in South America. We stand an excellent chance of seeing the world's largest rodent, the massive Capybara, South American Tapir, localised Marsh Deer, Black-and-gold Howler Monkey, Giant Anteater and even its smaller cousin, the Southern Tamandua. Night excursions will, of course, increase our chances of seeing several of these beasts but may also yield Scissor-tailed Nightjar and two species of potoo.

Chapada dos Guimarães. The region around the small town of Chapada dos Guimarães is most famous, and justifiably so, for its spectacular escarpments and waterfalls. Of greater interest to birders and photographers, however, are the great stretches of Cerrado, end even a few well-forested valleys. The Cerrado, a unique savanna confined mostly to Brazil, not only contains a set of fantastic endemic birds, but also a good deal of

threatened species of many plant and animal groups - owed mostly to its clearance for swathes of agriculture. Our time will be dedicated mostly to photographing within this habitat, but also the forested valleys and even some of the well-known tourist attractions.

In the Cerrado itself, Chapada Flycatcher, Collared Crescentchest, Rufous-winged Antshrike, Shrike-like and White-rumped Tanagers, Small-billed Tinamou, Sooty-fronted Spinetail, the delightful Coal-crested and Red Pileated Finches, Black-throated Saltator and perhaps even the sleek Horned Sungem will be the object of our desires, while forested areas will hopefully provide us with sightings of colourful Band-tailed and Fiery-capped Manakins, the endearing Southern Antpipit, Tataupa Tinamou, Sharp-tailed Streamcreeper (which we may locate by its striking calls), Pavonine Cuckoo, Brown Jacamar and the eye-catching Pectoral Sparrow.



Toco Toucan by Adam Riley

The raucous calls of Blue-winged and Red-and Green Macaws, on the other hand, are more likely to welcome us at the scenic Bridal Veil Waterfall or the Geodesic Centre viewpoint, where the scarce Blue Finch and Bat Falcon also occur. Nocturnal birding in the area may also produce several nightjars, including Little and Scissor-tailed Nightjars, which make for fascinating photographic subjects.

Tour Grading & Key

Photography		Good to excellent. Lots of feeders & opportunities by boat.
Overall Ease		Moderate. Suitable for all birding / wildlife interest levels and mobility capabilities.
Birding Ease		Most species provide good visuals in open conditions. Slightly more challenging on the Iguazu Ext.
Accommodation		Comfortable to very comfortable.
Walking / Trails		Mostly short walks on flat terrain. Some stairs around Iguazu Falls.
Vehicles / Roads		Good quality sealed & unsealed roads. Most drives are short. Boat rides last +-4-6 hours per outing.
Annoyances		Climate can vary from cold in the morning to very hot during the middle of the day.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from lunch on day 1 to breakfast on day 14;
- All lodgings;
- All ground transportation during the tour;
- Boat transportation as noted in the itinerary;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services;
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- In some areas it can be hot to very hot depending upon local weather conditions. On most mornings, we will be up and out early to take advantage of the cooler temperatures and wildlife activity before the day warms up.
- This Brazil & Argentina tour does not require a high level of fitness, but participants should be in good general health as some of the photography will be done on foot and may require walking for several hours at a time.
- Should you have any physical limitations or medical conditions please notify us in advance of departure.
- The vehicles we use are comfortable, although we should expect some bumpy roads depending upon local road conditions. There will be a few lengthy drives.
- Accommodation is generally comfortable throughout the tour although air conditioning is not available in some areas.

Bird Photo Tours

- Our Bird Photo Tours are a hybrid between our Classic birding tours and dedicated photographic tours. You don't have to be a professional photographer or have the biggest lens; this is for everyone with an interest in photography and birding. Whether you're using a bridge camera or the latest body and prime lens, our aims are the same.
- These tours are not aimed at seeing the most species possible on the route, rather taking time to photograph key targets and any other interesting species we may find. Naturally, the overall species list will be lower than a comparable birding focused tour.
- Whilst we may use blinds, feeders and hide setups on some of these tours, we will not be spending an entire day nor even several hours fixed in one spot.
- These tours are suitable for photographers who prefer opportunistic photography over entire days in a hide.
- Our leaders will assist in helping everyone secure good photographic opportunities and advise as much as they can on camera setup. However, they are not professional photographic tour leaders.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour starts at Foz do Iguacu International Airport, Brazil (IATA: IGU) and ends at Cuiaba International Airport (IATA: CGB).

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Foz do Iguacu International Airport (IATA: IGU) and Cuiaba International Airport (IATA: CGB) are located within Brazil. They are well serviced by a multitude of flights from major cities within Brazil such as Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.