

PANTANALRITTEN

Resan görs mellan april - september

The Pantanal, known as **the world biggest ecological sanctuary and largest wetland area**, covers some 240.000 km² of the upper Paraguay river basin, **Central-Western Brazil**, Eastern Bolivia and part of Paraguay, there called Chaco or Gran Chaco. The largest portion of the Pantanal, 124.457.145.22 km² lies in **Brazil**, of which about 2/3 is located in the **Brazilian states of Mato Grosso** and 1/3 in **Mato Grosso do Sul**, extending to the west into Bolivia and southwest to Paraguay. By comparison, the size of the Everglades in Florida is only 10.000 km².

According to most of the Portuguese-English dictionaries, **Pantanal** is a "large swamp or marsh". In reality the definition is not precise. The term **Pantanal** is correctly applied to a large land mass which becomes periodically submersed in most of its area, during the raining season from November through March.

The vegetation of the Pantanal is basically a mixture between three of the most important ecosystems of South America; the Chaco with its dry forest formations to the south, the savannah-like Cerrado to the east and the Amazon jungle to the north. As a result of the topography and the seasonal climate the landscapes consist of seasonally flooded grass and woodlands, and various types of forest (evergreen, semi deciduous, gallery etc.). This mixture has caused the Pantanal to house **the highest concentration of wildlife** in all of the Americas.

The Pantanal Fazenda Miranda and Wildlife Ride covers the áreas of Fazenda 23 de Março and the Fazenda Santa Cruz. Both are located in the Miranda region, approximately 135 Miles from Campo Grande. Each is set in a 15.000 acres property, rich in flora and fauna of the typical savannah bush land, seasonal wetlands and tropical forest areas. Both are active working ranches with over 3.000 head of cattle each and some sheep farming. The Santa Cruz has been founded before the war with Paraguay in the midst of the 19th century and is one of the oldest Fazendas of the Pantanal.

During 8days (6 full and 2 half days) the group will be riding on the vast lands, of the two fFzendas experiencing traditions of the Pantaneiro people, horses adapted to the temporarily flooded environment, the highest wildlife concentration of the Americas, particularly interesting for bird watchers. It is imperative, therefore, to keep your cameras ready at all times.

Day-by-day Itinerary

1st day -

Upon arrival Campo Grande (CGR) airport, you will be picked-up for group overland transfer to Fazenda 23 de Março in the Miranda region. It takes 2 ½ hrs on Federal Highway 262 plus 40 minutes on dirt road to get there. The group will be welcomed by host Evani, your guides Sergio

and Robson and all the other staff, with a decent "Caipirinha", the National drink. After taking quarters, some rest and a shower you will enjoy an authentic and hearty Pantaneiro lunch, cooked on the huge earthenware stove. Now you need some more rest. Your room features air-conditioning for your comfort. In the afternoon you will choose your horse on a first ride to Simon's Bay. There is an observation deck for bird watchers. These are some of the birds you will be able to watch: Southern or Crested Screamer, Neo Tropic Cormorant, Limpkin, Wattled Jacana, Great Kiskadee, Chaco Chachalaca, Plumbeous and Buff-necked Ibis, Yellow-billed and Red-crested Cardinal, Little Blue Heron, Cattle, Great, Capped and Snowy Egret, Surucua Trogon, Caatinga Cacholote, Crested Caracará, Laughing Falcon, Savannah Hawk, Black-collared Hawk, and the beautiful Hyacinth Macaw, just to mention a few.... Watch out, there are also Anacondas in that area. Back at the Fazenda, dinner is waiting and after that probably you are probably knocked out from the long journey and like to go to bed early.

2nd day -

Today you will ride through the rich fauna and flora of this part of the Brazilian Pantanal, which is dominated by permanent and temporary water deposits forming bays and lakes, offering abundance of wildlife. You will also ride through forests and native camps and pastures, with typical white Nelore cattle grazing on so called Invernadas, which are areas destined for specific cattle handling. Here you will also meet up with the cowboys of the 23, or actually riding with them straight from the fazenda to the Invernadas. Lunch is out in the wild today and you will be riding back to the Fazenda, together with the peões as the Pantanal cowboys are called, during sundown. After dinner you gather together with the staff and the guides to promote friendship and understanding of an amazing world, which is the Brazilian Pantanal.

3rd day -

Breakfast is set for 8am. Today's ride on the 23 de Março land takes you to the São Francisco outpost. During the ride splendid wildlife viewing can be expected. You might be able to see, Collared and White-lipped Peccary, Brazilian Tapir, Giant Anteater, possibly Squirrel and Howler monkey. Not far from the outpost is the São Francisco Bay, Brazil. Here we gear up for some catch and release fishing. As some in the group certainly like fish, we would not release all of them, but take some home for dinner, or we would just prepare and grill the catch right there for lunch in the wild. After that, lazy hammock swinging underneath a shadowy tree is appropriate. Anyway, we will ride back to the Fazenda at late afternoon. The plan for later at night is to take the jeep and set out for animal flashlight spotting. There are plenty of nocturnal animals out there, hiding during the day in the dense forest. We may see Azaras Agouti, Crab-eating Fox, Raccoon, Marsh Deer and why not, a Puma on hunt.

4th day -

Another day of great riding and wildlife watching on the property of the Fazenda 23 de Março. The riding today takes us to three different destinations with ever changing landscapes from hilly pastures to flooded areas and savannahs. At the tuyuyú Invernada, named after the biggest stork in the world, we break for lunch. We will be returning to the Fazenda in time to take a hike on the JD trail, named after the Fazendas owner Dr. Julio Dittmar.

The trail, leading through dense forest offers excellent bird and other wildlife watching. While on the sandy ground, it is easy to find a wide array of animal tracks, including Tapir, White-lipped Peccary and Puma, birds of all sizes and colors, flying from tree to tree. The forest is also home to squirrel and howler monkeys. Almost certain, we will be able to observe some of these animals.

5th day -

After breakfast we transfer on horseback to the Santa Cruz Fazenda. Having reached the limit of the 23 de Março range, crew and horses from the Santa Cruz are taking over the group. The landscape during the ride is typical of the untouched cerrado Bioma, a low wood or bush land savannah. During a break we restore energy with térééré, the cold mate tea, which is to the Pantaneiro people, what is Coke to us. After check-in to our comfortable rooms at Santa Cruz we enjoy refreshments and the fine cuisine of the Fazenda.

Following the siesta, the owners, Edena and Roberto Dittmar and daughter Helena, will take us for a Fazenda tour. The Santa Cruz Ranch is a one of the oldest ranches in this region of the Southern Pantanal and the family takes pride in introducing its visitors to the history of Santa Cruz which is tightly connected with the history of the Pantanal itself. This Fazenda originally encompassed some 20 thousand hectares and was founded by the forebears of the Dittmar family. Later the property was divided between the daughter and the 2 sons, Rosaura, Roberto "Beto" and João Julio Dittmar in equal pieces of 6500 hectares, being the Fazendas 23 de Março (João Julio), Santa Cruz (Roberto "Beto") and Cacimba de Pedra (Rosaura). We will be visiting the old sugar cane mill, the machine room, the "trail of the first well" and take the beautiful "Liana trail" through the surrounding forest. Following the tour we take a first ride over the property. Since the Dittmar family actually lives on the Fazenda, the meals are taken together in the dining room. After dinner, Senhor Beto is always ready for a good chat

6th day -

We have planned a long riding day on the temporary flooded landscape of the 6000 hectares property of the Santa Cruz Ranch. The vegetation is rich of beautiful *Tabebuia aurea*, also known as Yellow flowering trumpet tree or Paraguayan trumpet tree, Pink ipê, which flowers sometimes at the same time, extensive native pastures, exotic Caranda palm forest, Bocaiuva and Acuri Palms, carrying fruits that are the preferred of the biggest of all macaws, the Hyacinth macaw. An authentic Pantaneiro Churrasco BBQ out in the wild has been prepared for us. Considering the good food and the heat at mid day, we will appreciate the hammocks that have been strung underneath some shadowy tree for our comfort. Riding back to the Fazenda on trails called "Nachi Dachi" , "Sinisio rodeo", "Pedra Branca and Cheirosa lagoon" , 3 Gates, "Dry corral" , and so forth.... Almost certainly we meet during the ride bands of Coatis, 9 or 7 banded Armadillo and perhaps even the huge Yellow Armadillo, Pampas and White-tailed Deer, Giant or Lesser Anteater among others. Shower, relax, dinner and story-telling amidst the family and staff will end the day.

7th day -

This morning we will be riding to the Pirizal reed field and vazante, which is a natural water reservoir that retains water from the rainy season, withdrawing slowly in the dry season. Passing the "Conquista" outpost and "Stretched forest", we stop at a Hyacinth macaws nest and, crossing the vazante in north/south direction we contemplate another nest, that of the tuyuyú giant stork. After resting at "Jaguars hill", we take another trail back to the Fazenda for Lunch, having thus completed an 18kms ride today. Let's give the horses time off for the afternoon. We take a 4km bicycle ride through the "Cowboys corridor" a trail used by cattle drivers, to the "Conquista" shelter. On our way to "Conquista" and back, there is plenty of wildlife to observe. You may see Black Howler Monkey, Giant Anteater, Wild Boar, Red-legged Siriema, Snail Kite, Roadside Hawk and other animals that have made the area their home. Our hosts has equipped us with fishing gear, so that we can try our luck with the "piranhas" , which give an excellent soup, spiced with fresh chilli peppers, for dinner.

8th day -

Certainly you don't want to miss out this morning, on the last chance for your Pantanal wildlife discoveries on horseback. Breakfast is set for 07:30hrs. You may be lucky and see some of the animals you have not seen yet, such as Black and White Hawk, Red and Green Macaw, Toco Toucan, Lesser Anteater. You will return from the ride in time for a shower and check-out. A car or van takes the group to Campo Grande airport for return flight home or connections. This is the end of the Pantanal Fazenda Miranda and Wildlife Ride.

Our rates include:

- Surface transfer Campo Grande Airport-Fazenda 23 de Março
- Surface transfer Fazenda Santa Cruz - Campo Grande Airport
- Luggage transfers between Fazendas
- 7 overnights in fazendas
- 6 full and 2 half riding days - depending on flight departures
- 3 meals /day, refreshments
- Horses and guides
- Language: English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Dutch

Dates

Sat-Sat 14.04.- 21.04.
Sat-Sat 05.05.- 12.05. *) 06.05.
Sat-Sat 16.06.- 23.06.
Sat-Sat 30.06.- 07.07. **) *) 03.07.
Sat-Sat 14.07. -21.07. **) *)
Sat-Sat 04.08.- 11.08.
Sat-Sat 25.08.- 01.09. *) 31.08.
Sat-Sat 22.09.- 29.09.

* Full moon

**) dead-line for confirmed bookings: 20.04.2012

Horses, Handling and Tack

The Pantaneiro Horse has been developed as a cattle horse during the last 200 years in the state of Mato Grosso, the Northern Pantanal, to serve on the large farms which, not rare, measured some 150-200 thousand acres. The Pantaneiro or Poconé Horses resemble the Crioulo horse from the Southern Brazilian pampas, showing a bit higher members, though. It has adapted through natural selection to the temporary flooded terrain of the Pantanal feeds even with the pasture under water and does not develop hoof diseases. The horses used by the peões (cowboys) to work the extremely agile Nelore cattle, are very alert and enduring even under heavy work load, when temperatures may reach 40 °C and more. We offer those horses to the better qualified riders of the group.

Handling and tack of the horses is similar to the US American Western Style.

Saddles are lighter than western saddles and covered by 2-3 colorful sheepskin layers for long days riding.

To top the value and the fun of your trip to Brazil please ask for our after riding extensions.

Here are some of our