Program Itinerary: The Wonders of Brazil

Picture your family taking in the views from the top of Sugarloaf Mountain, swiveling through a samba lesson, and waking to a monkey chorus in a ranch-style eco-lodge. Brazil vibrates with life whether you’re deep in the heart of Rio de Janeiro or the vast wetlands of the Pantanal. On this trip, CTY families will experience both faces of Brazil, one of the world’s most energetic societies and richest eco-treasures. In Rio, we will experience the city like few visitors do as we ascend the highest peaks, penetrate a densely populated favela, explore the shoreline, and sample the music and food. Then we are off to the Pantanal, the largest tropical wetland on earth. At a glance, it may look empty, but life teems here as 1,000 bird species, mammals, and reptiles thrive in this easy-to-navigate terrain. Whether on horseback, in a canoe, on foot, or aboard safari vehicles, you’ll get an up-close look at this unique ecosystem and learn about the challenges of preserving it. Beginning to end, you’ll be accompanied by deeply experienced local guides who break down barriers and assure a personal cultural experience you’ll never forget.

Sunday, July 3: Rio de Janeiro

- Meet your guide and explore the historic city center
- Dinner overlooking Guanabara Bay

We meet in Rio and check into our 5-star hotel overlooking white-sand Copacabana and Leme beaches. This afternoon, we’ll explore the city’s central district on foot, with colonial landmarks that span Rio’s 400-year past. The grandiosity of the cathedral, palaces, and XV November Square are the ideal starting point as the coming days move forward in time to the vibrant city of today. Later, we drive to the hilltop neighborhood of Santa Teresa. A favorite haunt of local artists and musicians, it’s also the scene of tonight’s dinner in a carioca restaurant with great views across the city.

*Overnight: Windsor Atlantica Hotel Rio de Janeiro (D)*
Monday, July 4: Rio de Janeiro
- Stand at the foot of the Christ the Redeemer statue
- Bike through luxurious beach neighborhoods
- Follow the footsteps of “The Girl from Ipanema”

Wooded Corcovado Mountain is more than 2,300 feet high. It looks like it’s in the wilds, but this rugged peak is inside Rio’s city limits. This morning, we ride the narrow-gauge Rack Railway to the 100-foot-tall Christ the Redeemer statue, regarded as one of the 7 Modern Wonders of the World. Impressive as the iconic figure is, we especially love the amazing views that put the geography and layout of Rio on easy display. Back at sea level, we drive to the wealthy area of Lagoa. It’s a great spot to hop on a bike for an easy, level ride alongside the beaches. Back at the hotel, there’s time to relax and freshen up for a night on the town. We’re headed this evening to the birthplace of the bossa nova, Brazil’s unique blend of jazz and samba. Dinner is at a restaurant named for the lyricist of “Garota de Ipanema”, better known to us as “The Girl from Ipanema.” Afterward, we’ll settle in at the temple of bossa nova where musicians gather and play nightly.

Overnight: Windsor Atlantica Hotel Rio de Janeiro (B,L,D)

Tuesday, July 5: Rio de Janeiro
- Take a walk in a teeming favela
- Learn to swivel and sway, samba style
- Cook Brazilian specialties with a local chef

After breakfast, we’re off for an immersive, close-up look at contemporary life in Rio. Rocinha is the country’s largest favela, a steeply sloped and densely populated community that developed from a shantytown built by former slaves. By some counts, almost 12 million Brazilians live in favelas, and the chance to rub shoulders with them in the teeming streets gives us a close-up look at this way of life that most tourists never see. Everywhere, the sounds and tempo of samba are in the air, and we’ll stop at a local school for a fun lesson. Lunch is on your own along the Copacabana, but you might want to keep it light! Late this afternoon, we join our friend Chef Simone in her kitchen to tie on an apron and cook some of Brazil’s favorite dishes. Depending on the day, we may put together a feijoada (black bean and pork stew) or moqueca (a stew of seafood and coconut). It’s a terrific hands-on experience that culminates in a fantastic dinner that tastes all the better for having helped in its preparation.

Overnight: Windsor Atlantica Hotel Rio de Janeiro (B,D)
Wednesday, July 6: Rio de Janeiro

- Explore Tijuca forest on a tree canopy tour or walk
- Ride the aerial tram to the top of Sugarloaf Mountain

To all of the faces of Rio that we’ve seen so far, today we add one of the most distinctive. Tijuca National Park is more than a lush Atlantic rainforest. It is also the world’s largest urban forest, covering more than 12 square miles inside Rio’s city limits. We have two ways to explore it. You can join a tree canopy tour to zip-line and swing your way through the terrain or opt for a guided walk. Whether you’re up in the branches or down on the ground, you’ll see that this is a place rich in birdlife. Ocelots and howler monkeys live here too—in a neighborhood unlike any we’ve seen so far. After a picnic lunch, we’ll grab seats on the tram to the top of Sugarloaf Mountain. You know this mountain as its nearly straight sides leap above the surrounding terrain form the centerpiece of almost every photo of Rio. At the top, there’s a breathtaking 360-degree view—just maybe the best natural vantage point in any city on earth. You get to celebrate your last night in Rio de Janeiro at your own pace. Follow the music or ask for a recommendation to a quiet neighborhood restaurant where you can relax and remember your time in the city.

*Overnight: Windsor Atlantica Hotel Rio de Janeiro (B,L)*

Thursday, July 7: The Pantanal

- Fly to the world’s largest tropical wetlands
- Soak in the vast, quiet expanse on a guided walk
- Stargaze in the darkest of night skies

Today, a plane trip takes us northwest to Cuiabá Airport in the vastness of Brazil’s Mato Grosso state. It’s a startling and fascinating contrast to rugged Rio. Here the flat terrain stretches to distant horizons. The sky is huge and the sounds are of the wildlife. Our destination is an eco-lodge set on a 7,000-acre private reserve in the Pantanal. As huge as it is, it’s only a tiny fraction of the wetlands that cover up to 75,000 square miles in the rainy season—an area that’s more than 30 times the size of the modern Everglades. We’re in the midst of South America’s largest wildlife sanctuary. So, after settling in, we’ll take a guided walk where we can see hyacinth macaws, capybara, curassow birds and more. We’ll also have a chance to mingle with local ranchers and cowboys. After dinner, we take a not-to-be-missed night walk. Far removed from cities and other sources of light pollution, the sky blazes with stars like we rarely see. If you are an amateur astronomer, you’ll also appreciate the chance to get a fantastically clear view of the Southern Hemisphere’s constellations.

*Overnight: Araras Eco Lodge (B,L,D)*
Friday, July 8: The Pantanal

- Go on a photo safari in specially adapted vehicles
- Canoe in the quiet waters of a riverside forest
- Take a night ride to spot wildlife with searchlights

The Pantanal is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve. It’s home to 700 bird species, 80 types of mammals, and uncountable other fauna. Today, we have exceptional opportunities to see its diversity and splendor in the company of local naturalists and guides. After breakfast, we enjoy a photo safari in open-topped all-terrain vehicles adapted to this environment. From the comfort and safety of your perch, you’re in the best spot for catching sight of spoonbills to caimans. Then we board canoes. (You can paddle your own, or choose ride with a guide.) The waters here are always calm, so it’s easy to spot the giant river otters that live here and often make an appearance. As the day dwindles, we head to the Howler Monkey Tower to climb up for a view of the sunset—a limitless spectacle in these wide-open spaces. Back aboard the all-terrain vehicles, we’re treated to a night drive. The searchlights reveal nocturnal animals. At water’s edge, the light reflects red from the eyes of the caimans, revealing how abundant the predators are.

*Overnight: Araras Eco Lodge (B,L,D)*

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Saturday, July 9: The Pantanal

- Hike the Rondon Trail to Tuiuiu Tower
- Go for a ride on the gentle native horses
- Listen to the sounds of night around a campfire at the lodge

We’re well into the tempo of the Pantanal by now. So this morning’s walk is a chance to look past the birds and animals you’ve seen so often to gain a better understanding of this unique terrain. We’ll go to the top of 40-foot-high Tuiuiu Tower for a bird’s-eye view. As you’ll have seen, cattle graze the Pantanal as well. Over the years, the cowboys have developed a unique breed of horses that tolerate the climate and move calmly through this landscape. This afternoon, we’ll saddle up for a ride and to view the terrain from yet another perspective. After our farewell dinner, you’ll have a chance to relax by a campfire and soak in another fine Pantanal night.

*Overnight: Araras Lodge (B,L,D)*
Sunday, July 10: The Pantanal / Rio

- Watch the sun rise on a final walk
- Return to Rio de Janeiro

As the dark melts away, the night and day sounds of the Pantanal overlap in a short-lived chorus that’s not to be missed. This morning, you can join your guide for an early morning walk to experience that moment. Later, we return to Cuiabá Airport for the return flight to Rio where we part company.

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Program Information

Trip Length: 8 days/7 nights

Cost per person:  Register by March 1, 2016:
$5,400 per person

Register on March 2, 2016 or later:
$5,500 per person

Program includes

- Transportation within Brazil
- Hotel accommodations for 7 nights as designated on itinerary
- All meals as designated on itinerary when taken with the group
- Daily excursions, lectures, activities as designated on itinerary
- Fully guided program

Not Included in Tour Price
Airfare, airport transfers to and from hotel; personal expenses such as beverages, laundry, room service, and meals not specified; passports, visas; travel protection insurance; and all other services not specifically mentioned in the "Included Features" section above. Please note, we strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance, which is available for coverage of expenses in conjunction with cancellation due to illness or accident. Baggage insurance is also recommended.

Program Notes
All prices listed are in U.S. dollars. While we do everything possible to maintain the listed price and itinerary as described, they are subject to modifications due to availability of services. Rates are per person based on double occupancy. Single supplements are available. All reservations are subject to CTY Policies, Terms and Conditions found on our website at www.cty.jhu.edu/family/travel.
Accommodations

Windsor Atlantica Hotel. This perfectly located luxury property puts you right in the heart of the classic Rio beach scene. The sunny rooms are decorated in contemporary style. You have easy access to beaches including Ipanema, as well as pools on both the 4th and 39th floors.

Araras Eco Lodge. Built in rustic regional style, this ranch-house property has comfortable air-conditioned rooms. A thatched canopy covers the outdoor dining area where locally grown specialties are served. There’s a pool, too, and verandahs strung with hammocks.