

Guyana

Golden Frogs & Crimson Topaz

A Greentours Itinerary

Please be aware that the focus of the tour will be pretty much equally all fauna, so butterflies and mammals as well as reptiles and amphibians and birds. What is written below is largely what we know will be likely in terms of the birds, the other fauna is reported on in more detail in our reconnaissance report. So if you read the following itinerary please remember that birds will be on an equal footing with other fauna on the tour itself and not the sole purpose of the tour!

Day 1

Arrive Georgetown

We arrive into Georgetown in the middle of the evening and will transfer direct to the Cara Lodge.

Day 2

Abary River & Cara Lodge

After breakfast we will travel east from Georgetown to look for Blood-coloured Woodpecker and Rufous Crab-hawk, among many range-restricted species we will be hoping to find on the Abary River trail. We will also look for the poorly known White-bellied Piculet and Guianan Gnatcatcher, both of which can also be found in this area. We'll travel along the coast to the Mahaica River where we'll take a boat to see Guyana's national bird the Hoatzin, which is found in abundance along this river system. On our return journey to Georgetown, we may visit some mudflats where we are likely to find a range of herons and waders, as well as Scarlet Ibis, Black Skimmer, Brown Pelican and Magnificent Frigatebird.

Day 3

Kaieteur Falls

After breakfast we'll transfer to Ogle Airstrip for a flight over the rainforest to Kaieteur Falls. The falls, which were first seen by a European on April 29 1870, are situated in the heart of Guyana on the Potaro River, a tributary of the Essequibo. The water of Kaieteur, one of the world's natural wonders, flows over a sandstone conglomerate tableland into a deep gorge - a drop of 822 feet or five times the height of Niagara Falls.

Kaieteur supports a unique micro environment with Tank Bromeliads, the largest in the world, in which the tiny Golden frog spends its entire life and the rarely seen Guiana

Cock-of-the-rock nesting close by. The lucky visitor may also see the famous flights of the Kaieteur Swifts or Makonaima Birds which nest under the vast shelf of rock carved by water over the centuries. A tour around the Kaieteur Park will prove to be a truly fascinating experience. We will get the chance to view the Kaieteur Falls from several vantage points that offer excellent photo opportunities. With stealth and a little patience we can get a close-up view of the beautiful, but poisonous 'golden frog' and, if we're lucky we'll catch a glimpse of the brilliant orange Cock-of-the-rock. We will also make the acquaintance of several pretty carnivorous plants.

Re-boarding our flight after our all day experience at the fall we continue our journey onto the Iwokrama Rain Forest and lands at the village of Fairview. It is then a short drive to the Iwokrama River Lodge and Research Station

Day 4 – 10 (am)

The Iwokrama Forest & Essequibo River staying at Iwokrama, Rock View and Atta Lodges

The Iwokrama forest is rapidly gaining an international reputation for its healthy jaguar populations that seem not to be troubled by the appearance of curious humans. No promises, but many have been lucky! Along the road, we will watch for the myriad of bird species that frequent the forest edge, including Crimson and Purple-necked Fruit-crow, Crimson Topaz, Green Oropendula, Spotted and Guianan Puffbird, Scarlet and Red-and-Green Macaw, Blue-cheeked and Orange-winged Parrot and Gray-winged Trumpeter.

During our visit we'll stay at three lodges, The Iwokrama Lodge, Rock View Lodge and the Atta Rainforest Lodge. A major attraction at the latter is a 154-metre long canopy walkway 30 metres above the ground with 4 platforms close to our accommodation. Amongst the likely highlights are Golden-winged Parakeet, Caica Parrot, Guianan Puffbird, Waved & Golden-collared Woodpeckers, Spot-tailed & Todd's Antwrens, Grey Antbird, Olive-green Tyrannulet and Fulvous Shrike-tanager.

The walkway is also an excellent place to look for various cotingas including the poorly known and range-restricted Dusky Purpletuff. If there are any suitable fruiting trees nearby, we stand a good chance of seeing this bird, as well as the more widespread Purple-breasted Cotinga. During our three-night stay, another of our major targets will be the poorly known White-winged Potoo, which, after dark, can be found both around the lodge and at the walkway. This evening we will take a drive along the road in search of Jaguar.

Another area where we will want to spend some time is the clearing around the lodge, as this is one of the best places to see another of Guyana's "must see" birds, the Crimson Fruitcrow. This species is seen here on a reasonably regular basis, as it often comes to feed in some of the nearby trees. The clearing is also a reliable site for Black Curassow, as there is a family party which has become habituated to people

and regularly passes through the clearing. With reasonable luck, we should be able to add this bird to the impressive list of species we hope to see around the lodge and walkway. Other species we hope to encounter during our stay include Eastern Long-tailed Hermit, Crimson Topaz, Great and Paradise Jacamars, Guianan and Pied Puffbirds, Guianan Toucanet, Green and Black-necked Aracaris, Red-billed Woodcreeper, Black-throated Antshrike, Guianan Streaked Antwren, Guianan Warbling Antbird, Pompadour Cotinga, Purple-throated Fruitcrow, Tiny Tyrant-Manakin, Helmeted Pygmy-Tyrant, Golden-sided Euphonia and both Red-and-Black and Yellow-green Grosbeaks.

If the Harpy Eagle nest is active we will most certainly visit. The nest itself is located in a huge emergent tree only a couple of miles from the village and if we are extremely fortunate, we may see one of the adult birds bringing a sloth or monkey to the nest to feed their chick. The trek into the nest site is about an hour each way on a reasonable trail. Our journey continues for lunch at Rock View Annai. The Rupununi Savannah is to Guyana what the Gran Sabana is to Venezuela, an extensive area of grassland with termite mounds and scattered or riparian woodland. It differs in that much of it is devoted to cattle raising, though the large ranches are not very productive. Indeed, one can travel for hours without seeing a domestic animal of any sort. Needless to say, the birdlife here is markedly different from that of the rainforest. Fork-tailed Flycatchers, Savannah and Black Collared Hawks patrol the grassland. Eventually we reach the Rock View Lodge at Annai where we'll stay for three nights. The resort with its tropical gardens and flowering trees, resembles an oasis in the savannah, and attracts many species of birds, particularly nectar feeders and frugivores. Amazonian Tropical, Amethyst Woodstar, White-chinned Sapphire, Long-billed Starthroat and several Hermits patrol around the grounds. Nearby forest patches are home to Amazonian Scrub Flycatcher, Rufous-browed Peppershrike and a variety of ant bird. We'll finish the day with drinks around the pool and a talk on local history by Colin Edwards.

An morning transfer by 4x4 takes us to the Amerindian village of Wowetta and then we'll walk along 5kms of well-maintained trail through virgin rainforest to a Guianan Cock-of-the-rock lek with over 30 birds. It is an exciting experience to view Guianan Cock-of-the-rocks in their natural habitat. You have the opportunity to see them nesting in caves, performing their mating dance on the lek, bathing in pools and perched in trees for perfect viewing. The tour is a community based project managed by the Indigenous Community of Wowetta.

One dawn we'll take a walk in the foothills of the Pakaraima Mountains on the Panorama Trail where you might see Cinereous Mourner, Finsch's Euphonia, Reddish Hermit, Rufous-bellied Antwren, Green-tailed and Yellow-billed Jacamar. The views across the savannah and villages as the sun rises are spectacular. At dusk as nightjars and nighthawks tumble over the grasslands we will look for the Nacunda Nighthawk and White-tailed Nightjar.

The Iwokrama River Lodge is located in a clearing by the Essequibo River. We plan to make a number of short stops and species we could encounter include the range-restricted Blue-cheeked Amazon as well as Red-billed Woodcreeper, Spix's & Marail Guans, Grey-winged Trumpeter and Red-fan Parrot. We will stop at Mori Scrub, characterized by an unusual low, sandy forest. Our target birds here will include Guianan Red-Cotinga, Black Manakin, Rufous-crowned Elaenia and Yellow-throated Flycatcher. Rufous-winged Ground-cuckoo has also been seen nearby and if we hear one calling we will certainly attempt to locate it.

The Iwokrama Rainforest is a vast wilderness of one million acres. This protected area was established in 1996 as the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development. The Iwokrama Forest is in the heart of one of four last untouched tropical forests of the world - The Guiana Shield of North-Eastern South America. Iwokrama was established as a living laboratory for tropical forest management because the unsustainable utilisation of these forests will result in the extinction of half the world's plant and animal species and unknown changes to global climate.

This is a protected area with a difference - the full involvement of people. Iwokrama is exceptional among conservation organizations because it joins with local people in every aspect of its work. From research to business, Iwokrama ensures local economic and social benefits from forest use and conservation. The Forest is in the homeland of the Makushi people, who have lived here and used the forest for thousands of years. People are an integral part of the ecosystem. The success of Iwokrama relies on the ownership of local people and the combined skills of specialists and communities. Iwokrama does what so many International conventions have acknowledged as best practice. It has begun conservation locally and integrated conservation into national development.

The trails close to the Iwokrama Field Station may reveal quill-rattling by Spix's Guan or Crestless Curassow. Species noted will be Buff-throated Foliage-gleaner, Olivaceous Woodcreeper, Eastern Slaty-Antshrike, Sooty-headed Tyrannulet and Tiny Tyrant Manakin. Iwokrama is home to many bird species including Black Nunbird, Chestnut-rumped Woodcreeper, Amazonian Antshrike, Brown-bellied Antwren, Spot-tailed Antwren, Todd's Antwren, Spotted Puffbird, Guianan Cock-of-the-rock, Green Aracari, Guianan Toucanet, Guianan Red Cotinga, Pompadour Cotinga, Rufous-crowned Elaenia, Bronzy Jacamar, Chestnut & Waved Woodpecker, Gray Antbird, and Strong-billed Woodcreeper. Close by the Lodge is a Capuchinbird lek. Three other Neotropical species in the Iwokrama forest of high interest are White-winged Potoo, Rufous Potoo, and Rufous-winged Ground-cuckoo. Finally, after dark, we'll set out on the river once more, in hopes of finding one or another of its four species of caiman, and listen for nightbirds such as Spectacled Owl, White-winged Potoo, Rufous Potoo, Long-tailed Potoo, Zigzag Heron or Blackish Nightjar. We may see snakes including Cox boa, tree frogs and if lucky maybe some mammals. Maybe even a puma or capybara.

A pre-dawn breakfast before we set out by boat for half an hour or less to the foot of Turtle Mountain. Here we explore the trails for a few hours first visiting Turtle Ponds where Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Sunbittern, Sungrebe, Greater Ani, and Green and Rufous Kingfisher hunt. We will continue through the forest, looking for Red Fan Parrot, Red-throated Caracara, Double-toothed Kite, White-plumed and Ferruginous-backed Antbird and Royal Flycatcher along the way. Climbing to an elevation of 900 feet, we get a view of the forest canopy below and chances of Green Aracari, White Bellbird or a fly-by of one of five types of Eagles. This trail is also a great location for seeing Black Spider Monkey and Red Howler Monkey and if we are very lucky even a Jaguar. This pristine forest offers huge buttress trees and the endemic Greenheart, a highly sought after hardwood.

During our stay an Iwokrama Ranger or manager will give us a brief overview of Iwokrama and the work they are conducting along with a tour of the facilities. Iwokrama boasts an avifauna of over 450 species, including the full spectrum of neotropical families. Large macaws are still wonderfully common, and we should be treated to daily flights of Blue and Yellow, Red and Green and Scarlet Macaws. To see some of the more difficult to find species however, we will need to walk some of the nearby trails, where we could encounter a wide variety of antbirds including Cinereous Antshrike, Brown-bellied & Pygmy Antwrens, Dusky & Rufous-throated Antbirds, Black-faced Antthrush and Spotted Antpitta. Other species we could encounter include Turquoise Tanager and Crested Oropendola. As the afternoon cools we set out on a boat trip to visit Kurupukari Falls to see the Amerindian petroglyphs (dependent on the water level). Then visit the small Amerindian village of Fair View where we can experience the process and use of cassava, the staple of the Amerindian diet. Driving out to a place known as 58 Mile which is a good location for an opportunity to spot jaguar.

Days 10 (pm) – 13 (am) **Rewa River**

We travel along the Rupununi River with opportunities to see wild Giant River Otters and Black Caiman. We will pass locals fishing and bathing in the river until we reach the Rewa River and the Amerindian community of Rewa.

Rewa Village is located where the Rewa River runs into the Rupununi River in the North Rupununi. The surrounding area is rainforest, mountains and oxbow lakes and teeming with wildlife birds and fish. The community of approximately 220 persons is predominately Macushi with a few families of the Wapashani and Patamona tribes. Villagers practice subsistence farming, fishing and hunting with little opportunity for cash employment. In 2005 the community constructed the Rewa Eco-lodge so that they could establish a sustainable eco-tourism business. The lodge itself is situated on the river bank overlooking the Rewa River with views down river to the Rupununi River. Along the river bank tables and benches offer a relaxing location to enjoy the river.

The first afternoon here we'll take a boat up the Rewa River and then a fifteen minute hike to Grass Pond. This pond or lake is about 3 kms long and has a beautiful setting. It has a good population of Arapaima, (reportedly the highest density in Guyana) the largest fresh water fish in the world, and Peacock Bass are also found in these waters. During a late afternoon visit we may see Brown Capuchin monkey or Capybara. Birds likely to be seen include Limpkin, Wattled Jacana, Black-collared Hawk, Green Kingfisher and Guianan Puffbird. As dusk settles watch the flower of the *Victoria amazonica* open.

The next morning we'll head out by boat along the Rupununi River, into an oxbow lake to begin a hike up Awarmie Mountain. The walk is steep in a few sections but in general not too difficult. Along the way we will see lots of birds and perhaps good close up views of Black Spider Monkeys. White Bellbirds call at the beginning of the trail and again from the forests far below us when we reach the summit. Other species we may see include Ornate Hawk-eagle, Black Curassow, Red-fan Parrot, Guianan Puffbird, Todd's Antwren, Spotted Tanager and Bay-headed Tanager. The area also has a high density of macaws including Scarlet, Blue-and-yellow and Red-and-Green Macaws. At the summit we will have absolutely stunning views across rainforest to the distant mountains. There is a small plateau on the top of the mountain, and in one direction there are uninterrupted views back to the Rupununi River, some patches of savannah and across to the distant Kanuku Mountains. In the other direction, there is a near vertical drop of at least 200m and the view is across great swathes of undisturbed forest to the distant Iwokrama Mountain and much closer, Makarapan Mountain.

We'll return to the lodge for lunch, then there will be an option to take a walk through the community of Rewa to see how the locals live. We can visit villager's houses and experience their everyday life and see activities such as grating cassava, weaving baskets and tending kitchen gardens.

Later in the afternoon we'll travel up the Rewa River to a location known as Seawall. This rock formation is a great place to fish or take in the beauty of the location. Visit sand banks where giant river turtles come to lay their eggs. On the return trip we'll spotlight for wildlife. Along the river banks we may see red howler monkeys, squirrel monkeys and brown capuchin.

Days 13 (pm) - 16 (am)

Rupununi Savannahs & Karanambu including a visit to the Caiman House Field Station

After breakfast we transfer by boat back to Kwatamang Landing with a stop along the way for some hiking. The journey is approximately fifty miles by river and can be as short as two hours and as long as four hours depending on the water level. We'll stop at Rock View where the group will have a chance of a bathroom break and lunch before continuing journey to Ginep Landing where we'll cruise slowly on the Rupununi

River to the Karanambu Lodge. This will give us another excellent opportunity to look for various river-edge, wetland and open country species. We stand a good chance of seeing Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Jabiru, Wood Stork, Green Ibis, Northern (Crested) Caracara, Black-collared Hawk, Zone-tailed Hawk, Brown-throated Parakeet, Crestless Curassow, Bat Falcon, King Vulture, White-necked Jacobin, Golden-spangled Piculet, Drab Water Tyrant and Swallow-wing. Depending on the river level, this trip will offer an excellent chance to see Giant Otters as there are several family groups which live along this stretch of the Rupununi River.

The journey ends at the Amerindian village of Yupukari and Caiman House. Caiman House is the hub of several participatory development projects, including the introduction of classroom libraries in all three village schools and an internet-enabled public library. Visitors may have the opportunity to meet local craftspeople, including the furniture builders at Yupukari Crafters, a nonprofit venture to create village jobs and generate income to sustain educational development.

This afternoon explore the village or go birdwatching in the savannah or along the river bank. Tonight we'll enjoy a foray on the Rupununi River from Caiman House Field Station. As guests we have the unique opportunity to support and participate in an ongoing field study of the Black Caiman (*Melanosuchus niger*), the largest member of the alligator family and an endangered species. You will observe the capture from a separate boat, but will be offered the opportunity to assist in data collection. Caiman are weighed, measured, sexed and tagged before being released back into the river. The research has already discovered interesting information on caiman nests that was previously unknown. We will have another chance to enter the nocturnal world of the Rupununi River and associated gallery forests and see a world of wildlife entirely different than that viewed on a day trip.

Just after darkness settles on the river many creatures emerge such as black caiman (to over 12 feet), spectacled caiman, tree boas, iguanas, frogs, and many fish species (arowana, piranha). Sleeping birds such as kingfishers, nightjars, potoos, Boat-billed Herons and other aquatic birds, bats, (harmless) spiders, insects, moths, and more can be closely approached in a way not possible during the hours of light. Less likely, but not rare inclusions for night viewing include possums, tree dwelling rodents, capybara and sleeping monkeys (especially squirrel monkeys) amongst other mammals. Few nights pass without some unusual offering.

On one of the days we will have an opportunity to do some birding on the savannah or visit the community of Yupakari to see how they live. After breakfast we will transfer by boat to the Karanambu Ranch, the home of Diane McTurk, widely known for her work in rehabilitating orphaned, giant river otters. Diane and her otters have appeared on National Geographic, Jeff Corwin Experience, Really Wild Show (BBC) and Calgary's "Zoo World". Karanambu has a long history of visiting naturalists and Diane's father, Tiny McTurk, has welcomed David Attenborough and Gerald Durrell (Three Singles to Adventure). Diane sometimes has resident orphaned otters and we

can help her as she tends to them. We can explore woodland patches or gallery forest along the river where we'll hope to find such species as Spotted Puffbird, Striped Woodcreeper, Pale-bellied Tyrant-Manakin, Golden-spangled Piculet, Bearded Tachuri and Capuchinbird. When water levels are appropriate a wooded swamp near the ranch is the site of a surprisingly large colony of Boat-billed Herons, and, as well as several species of egrets, we'll see Anhingas and Wattled Jacarnas. A feature bird for the area is Agami Heron. Dinner with Diane will include stories on the history of the family and the Rupununi Savannahs. Late in the afternoon we will travel by boat to look for wild Giant River Otters and as dusk falls we'll go to the ponds to see the giant *Victoria regis* waterlily as its flowers again. At Crane Pond we can see hundreds of Ibis, Anhinga, herons and egrets roosting. On the return trip we will spotlight for Black Caiman and birds and creatures of the night.

Day 16 (pm) **Georgetown**

After a morning out in the savannah searching for Giant Anteaters we'll transfer by 4x4 to the airstrip for a scheduled flight back to Georgetown.

We've an optional afternoon tour of the city finishing with a visit to the Georgetown Botanical Gardens in central Georgetown where a good range of species can be found. These include Snail Kite, Grey Hawk, Brown-throated Parakeet, Yellow-chinned Spinetail, Black-crested Antshrike, Greyish Saltator, Buff-breasted Wren, Ashy-headed Greenlet, Golden-spangled Piculet, Spotted Tody-flycatcher, Wing-barred Seedeater and Carib Grackle. The ponds in the gardens are also home to Caribbean Manatee.

Day 17 **Depart Georgetown**

An early morning departure from Georgetown to Trinidad where we've a good long break before flying on to the UK. We'll get out and about seeking some of the island's best wildlife

Day 18 **Arrive UK/Europe**

Call 01298 83563 or visit www.greentours.co.uk for a trip report from our previous tours to Guyana. If you would like to ask about any other aspect of this holiday, please call 01298 83563 or email us at enquiries@greentours.co.uk.

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