

GUYANA

Tour Dates: January 10-20, 2008

Tour Leaders: Richard Knapton & local guide(s)

Price: \$3975 USD, Single supplement \$585

Trip Highlights:

- Exceptional, high quality birding and wildlife viewing in a range of habitats
- Picturesque and spectacular scenery, from huge waterfalls to stretches of unbroken forest and scenic rivers
- Exciting experiences, from staying in a Macushi village to meeting world-famous Diane McTurk and her orphaned Giant Otters

Featured Wildlife:

- Guianan Cock-of-the-Rock
- Guianan Red-Cotinga
- Giant Otter
- Blood-coloured Woodpecker
- Purple-breasted Cotinga
- Capuchinbird
- White-plumed Antbird
- Red-Fan Parrot
- Paradise Jacamar

Trip Summary:

- Diverse wildlife habitats
- Considerable travel by boat on rivers, backwaters and streams
- Both night drives and boat rides after dark
- Accommodation rustic to modern, but all comfortable
- Bus or van with driver
- 6 to 12 participants with two leaders
- Mainly tropical climate, mix of sun and rain
- Includes in-country flights
- Trails easy to moderate walking; some short steep sections

ITINERARY

Guyana (formerly British Guyana), an English-speaking country on the north coast of South America, has a small human population concentrated along the coast and the rest of the country is a marvelous stretch of unbroken, mostly untouched rainforest blending into savanna on the border with Brazil. It is a country that is slowly awakening to the potential of ecotourism and the consequent sustainable use of natural habitats, so our tour is a timely support to encourage this progress.

Guyana is home to Kaieteur Falls, where the Potaro River plunges 741 feet in the single longest drop of any waterfall in the world. It is also home to the vast Iwokrama Forest Reserve and its miles of forest roads and trails and a new canopy walkway, up to 30 m in height and over 150 m in length; this reserve has gained the reputation of being among the best sites on earth for such amazing species as Harpy Eagle and Jaguar. We take in the Amerindian village of Surama, at an ecolodge run by the local Macushi tribe situated in savanna and ringed by the forest-covered Pakaraima Mountains; this is a fascinating experience to stay among these friendly and very knowledgeable folks. We visit the Karanambu Ranch along the Rupununi River, an ecolodge run by Diane McTurk, world famous for her amazing rehabilitation of orphaned Giant Otters, and featured in wildlife shows of David Attenborough and Gerald Durrell. We experience a land where travel is as much by boat along several mighty rivers, the Essequibo, Demerara and Rupununi, arising on the Guyanan Shield and flowing out into the Atlantic. The large expanses of untouched forest are a welcome sight, offering a good deal of hope for the continued survival of those species that require large unfragmented habitats – eagles, big cats, tapirs, macaws, parrots, cotingas and much more. This is an excellent opportunity to bird the riches of South America – diversity will be very high! It also has a sense of adventure as we travel by boat along rivers and waterways through miles of forests, or fly over large expanses of forests to land beside huge waterfalls or on vast savannas, and stay in lodges far removed from other habitation.

Day 1 Arrival in Guyana.

On arrival at Cheddi Jagan airport in Guyana, we transfer to our hotel in Georgetown. Our route to our hotel and the hotel grounds will introduce us to many familiar birds – Cattle, Great and Snowy Egrets, perhaps Southern and Yellow-headed Caracaras, Southern Lapwing, Pale-vented Pigeon, Orange-winged Parrot, Brown-throated Parakeet, Tropical Kingbird, Southern House-Wren and Gray-breasted Martin. Overnight Georgetown.

Day 2 Botanical Garden/Iwokrama Field Station

This morning, we have an early start where we greet sunrise at the Georgetown Botanical Gardens, a marvelous area of palms, mature trees, waterways covered in lotus blossoms, and many choice birds, from Snail Kites, Limpkins and Donacobius to many parrots and macaws including both Red-bellied and Red-shouldered Macaws, Black-crested Antshrike, White-bellied and Golden-spangled Piculets, Crimson-crested Woodpecker, and perhaps the star bird of the gardens – Blood-coloured Woodpecker, a very scarce endemic limited to coastal Guyana and Suriname.

We then transfer to the Ogle Airstrip for a flight to the Iwokrama Airstrip, and from there to the Iwokrama Field Station in the immense Iwokrama Forest Preserve for a two night stay. A night drive could turn up White-winged Potoo as well as Pauraque, an owl or two, and a fair chance at a Jaguar.

Overnight at Iwokrama Field Station

Day 3 Iwokrama Forest Reserve

We spend all day birding this fantastic area. Our tally at the end of the day should be quite impressive; possibilities include Black-tailed, Amazonian Violaceous and White-tailed Trogons, Paradise Jacamar, Black-spotted Barbet, Green Oropendola, Red-rumped Cacique, the splendid Guyanan Red Cotinga, the extremely rare Rufous-vented Ground-Cuckoo, Reddish Hermit, Helmeted Pygmy-Tyrant, Plain-brown Woodcreeper, Spotted Antpitta, and White-plumed and Rufous-throated Antbirds. Both Howler and Spider Monkeys are frequently encountered, and there is always a chance for Harpy Eagle.

Iwokrama Lodge is situated along the Essequibo River, where Cocoi and Capped Herons, Black Skimmer, Large-billed and Yellow-billed Terns, and Anhinga can be found. An evening boat ride should reveal several Black Cayman and white Ghost Bats, as well as Ladder-tailed Nightjars.

Overnight at Iwokrama Field Station

Day 4. Iwokrama Canopy Walkway, Surama Village.

We head off early through the Forest Reserve, stopping at the Mori Scrub, an area of sandy forest that has a unique suite of species including Black Manakin and Rufous-crowned Eleania, and carrying on to the superb metal canopy walkway, a series of suspension bridges and decks up to 30 m in height and 154 m in length. In this area are some especially choice species, from Harpy Eagle to Jaguar and Puma. We have the opportunity to see several canopy specialists such as the diminutive Dusky Purpletuft, Purple-breasted and

Spangled Cotingas, Todd's and Guianan Streaked Antwrens, Guyanan Puffbird, Dusky and Caica Parrots, and a variety of woodcreepers, woodpeckers, honeycreepers, tityras, toucans, aracarís and more. Trails to and from the walkway support a rich diversity of tinamous, foliage-gleaners, antshrikes, grosbeaks and other goodies.

Later in the day we carry on to the Macushi village of Surama, where the open savanna supports the local Finsch's Euphonia, Straight-billed Woodcreeper and White-winged Becard. We arrive at our Eco-Lodge at Surama to be greeted by elders of the Macushi and treated to a fine traditional meal before retiring to our "benabs" – thatched sleeping shelters.

Overnight at Surama Guest House

Day 5. Surama, transfer to Annai and Rock View Lodge

We awake to the sounds of the dawn chorus, perhaps a Great Potoo growling close to our benab. We have an early morning walk along the trail across the savanna and into the forest to the Buro Burro River. We could find an array of new species here: Black-banded Woodcreeper, Golden-sided Euphonia, Red-and-green Macaw, Red-fan, Caica and Blue-headed Parrots, Scale-backed, White-plumed, Ferruginous-backed and Dusky Antbirds, and Lesser and Plain-crested Elaenias

We then continue to the village of Annai, the Rupununi Savanna's northernmost community and to our accommodations at Rock View Lodge. As we travel through the forest and savanna, we will look out for such interesting and spectacular species as Pompadour Cotinga, Painted and Golden-winged Parakeets, Green Aracari and Swallow-wing. There is always the possibility of a Jaguar crossing the trails or Howler Monkeys in overhead trees.

At Rock View Lodge, a walk around the grounds could turn up Buff-necked Ibis, Great Black Hawk, Double-toothed Kite, Golden-headed and White-crowned Manakins, Yellow-crowned Elaenia, and Wedge-capped (Weeping) Capuchin monkeys.

Overnight at Rock View Lodge.

Day 6 Wowetta/Rock View Lodge.

We take an early morning walk into nearby rocky forested hill, and look for Spotted Puffbird, Pale-eyed Pygmy-Tyrant, White-bellied Antbird, Green-tailed Jacamar, Blue-backed Manakin, White-fringed Antwren, Blue-tailed Emerald, Little Cuckoo, Roraiman (Two-banded) Warbler and the superb Pectoral Sparrow.

After breakfast, we travel to Wowetta village, for a hike along the aptly named Cock-of-the-Rock trail. We will take our time along this fairly flat trail, looking for Great Tinamou, Gray-winged Trumpeter, Bat Falcon, Eastern Long-tailed Hermit, Amazonian Violaceous and Black-throated Trogons, Black Nunbird, Yellow-throated Woodpecker, Mouse-coloured Antshrike, Gray and Ferruginous-backed Antbirds, White-crested Spadebill, Helmeted Pygmy-Tyrant, noisy Screaming Pihas, Fulvous Shrike-Tanager, and with luck many Guyanan Cocks-of-the-Rock – a spectacular sight! These brilliantly plumaged birds, decked out in orange, black and white, gather at leks, and display to impress any female that happens to be close by. Whilst we may not witness a full display, nevertheless, the sight of these exquisite birds is unforgettable.

Later in the day, we bird the surrounding savanna, looking for open country raptors, Wedge-tailed Grassfinch, Double-striped Thick-knee and possibly Jabiru.

Overnight at Rock View Lodge.

Day 7 Rupununi River/Karanambu Ranch.

Today we transfer to Ginep Landing and the Rupununi River, where we embark for travel upstream to the Karanambu Ranch. We pass by large expanses of unbroken forest as we journey south upstream, watching for Black-collared Hawk, kingfishers, herons, maybe Capybara or even Giant Otter, before arriving at Karanambu and being greeted by Diane McTurk and her remarkable rehabilitation facilities for orphaned Giant Otters – and we may indeed be greeted by one of her orphans!

Overnight at Karanambu Ranch.

Day 8 Karanambu Ranch.

Karanambu Ranch is situated in an area of rainforest and savanna, and as such has an interesting assortment of wildlife, from Giant Anteaters to Capuchinbirds. We spend our time here searching forested trails, open savannas and the rivers and backwaters close to the ranch. Waterbirds could include Boat-billed Heron, Rufescent Tiger-Heron, Ringed and Amazon Kingfishers, the superb Agami Heron, and Wattled

Jacanas walking on the amazing Amazonian Water-Lillies. Forest trails could produce Crestless Curassow, White-tailed Trogon, Black-chinned Antbird and Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher, and grasslands could turn up Bearded Tachuri, Bicolored Wren and White-tailed Goldenthrout. Night rides can be productive, especially for nighthawks such as Band-tailed and Least, and White-tailed Nightjar.
Overnight at Karanambu Ranch.

[Day 9 Karanambu Ranch/Kaieteur Falls/Shanklands Rainforest Resort.](#)

We fly to Kaieteur Falls, stopping to admire this amazing spectacle, where the Potaro River plunges 741 feet in the single longest drop of any waterfall in the world. We walk around this interesting area, with its unique flora of heaths and giant ground bromeliads (with its golden frog). Guyanan Cocks-of-the-Rock occur here, as do the striking White-tipped Swift, which nests behind the waterfall, Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift, Orange-breasted Falcon, Sunbittern, Red-shouldered Tanager, and noisy Coraya Wrens.

We then continue our flight to Baganara Island, where we transfer to Shanklands Rainforest Resort, arriving for supper and some evening birding. In the evening, Short-tailed Nighthawks hunt insects in the clearings, and at night Tawny-bellied Screech-Owls call close to our cabins.

Overnight at Shanklands Rainforest Resort.

[Day 10 Shanklands Rainforest Resort/Georgetown.](#)

We spend the morning birding the forest and open areas around the resort. We have possibilities of several species that we may have missed up to now, perhaps Green Ibis, Spix's Guan, Buff-throated Foliage-gleaner, Spotted and Painted Tody-Flycatchers, Cinereous Becard, Black-faced Dacnis, Yellow-rumped Caciques with attendant Shiny and Giant Cowbirds and Piratic Flycatchers, Cayenne Jay and Epaulet Oriole. We then transfer back to Georgetown for a celebratory evening meal.

Overnight Georgetown

[Day 11 Departure](#)

We head for the airport for our departure flights home.

WHAT TO EXPECT

You can expect some early morning, before breakfast excursions as well as a couple of very early breakfasts so we can be in the field for dawn. Everywhere in the tropics it is desirable to be in good habitat by daybreak when bird activity and song are at their peak. Often we return to our lodge around noon for lunch and a siesta. We bird in the cool of the late afternoon. We also have night drives as we travel along roads in the Iwokrama Forest Preserve, and night boat rides at the Kurunambu Ranch.

Our tour includes in-country air flights and several boat trips as we travel from one destination to the next. On days that we drive, we travel short distances in order to maximize our time in the field. Most birding will be from quiet roads, wide trails, boats and the marvelous canopy walkway at Iwokrama. The trails we walk are mostly flat and easy to moderate, with some short steep sections. You can expect hot weather, sometimes humid, with a mixture of sun and cloud and occasional rain. Stout, waterproof footwear is an advantage and a light rain jacket and waterproof hat are recommended. A small umbrella is also very useful. Mosquitoes and other biting insects should not be a problem on this tour, but it is advisable to bring insect repellent and powdered sulphur to repel chiggers.

Accommodations vary from rustic to modern; all will be comfortable. Our visit to the Macushi village of Surama will be a fascinating experience. Most meals will be taken at the lodges; on some days we will have picnic lunches prepared for us in order to maximize our time in the field and allow a more flexible schedule. In the evening, after dinner, we will discuss the day's events and sightings and list the birds and other wildlife seen and prepare for the next day's itinerary.