

Trip Review: Best of Brazil: Cultural Rhythsm and Natural Wonders. Overseas Adventure Travel, April, 2014

I did this trip in April 2014, including the pre-trip to the Atacama and it was an excellent experience. Our guide, Jorge Elage was beyond-excellent and could handle everything that was thrown at him with ease. He made sure we saw and did everything we wanted to do and even spoke with us individually about our expectations for the trip. He has set a new standard for OAT guides.

Ours was the 6th group to do this itinerary. There are some long drives and numerous flights (Brazil is a BIG country) but it was worth it to be able to see what we did in the time we had.

Here are some comments that might be useful to anyone thinking about this trip:

1. Clothing -- Brazil is an informal country. I am glad I brought wicking tops for the Amazon and the Pantanal portions of the trip as it was hot and humid in these areas.
2. Food -- high quality, delicious and plentiful all the way through!
3. Hotels - excellent . They were 5-star, safe and well-located in Rio, Salvador and Manaus. The accommodation in the Pantanal was comfortable, air-conditioned and all-inclusive.
4. Internal flights -- there are 8 internal flights if you are doing the pre and post - so bring reading material
5. Safety - best not to wear jewelry or anything shiny while touring Rio, Salvador and Santiago (pre-trip). You do not want to call attention to yourself.
6. Money -- there is not a whole lot to buy outside of Rio. I withdrew 800R (about \$400 USD) from the ATM and it was more than enough to cover any extra expenses, including tipping local guides, drivers, and boat and pantanal lodge staff.
- 7.Plugs and electricity: someplaces it is 220 and other places 120. Be sure to notice any signs. Also Brazil uses a 2 or 3 prong plug in a hexagon casing. You can buy one at the hotel shop in Rio.
8. You might think about giving your school supplies to the village in the Pantanal. We noticed pencils, markers and pens on the ground in the village in the Amazon as they are often visited.

The Boat: All rooms are the same except for the two balcony rooms on the upper deck. If you are a bird-enthusiast, you would enjoy these rooms as they have large front and

side windows. The balcony is shared between the two rooms. The other 8 rooms are exactly the same, comfortable, have a/c, lots of 110v. electrical outlets, a safe for valuables, and great lighting for reading. There are lots of hangers in the closet alcove as well as storage space. Since I was a single, I pushed the beds together to make a little more floor room and used the extra bed for my carry-on and to lay out clothes and things needed for the next activity.

The food is excellent and all meals are served buffet-style. There is coffee, tea and snacks available all day. The crew seems well used to OAT groups and are helpful and very nice. We saw no need to lock our doors.

You are in the rainforest, so its important to carry rain gear with you at all times. Walking boots are essential and a walking stick is helpful, though the guides will cut you a stick if you ask.

We stopped at a supermarket before embarking. I bought two large bottles of water, though water is provided from 5 gallon containers on the boat. I liked having extra water in my room.

The Pantanal - our trip was in late April and it was VERY hot and humid. The lodge is an all-inclusive and all food is provided. Rooms are comfortable, have mosquito netting over the bed and there is a mini-fridge stocked with water (chargeable). Each cabin has a porch with table/chairs and a hammock. We stopped at a supermarket after our flight from Manaus to pick up a bite to eat on the way to the lodge and I also bought three large bottles of water to have as extras. The lodge has filtered water on the tables, but I had a little problem with this the first night, so was glad for the bottled water I had bought at the supermarket. I also bought water or soft drinks during meals.

This is a little more expensive trip due to the quality of the hotels and the internal flights, but well worth the time and expense.